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A Little Lower Than the Angels

By
CHARLES H. PARKHURST
Pastor of the Madison Square Presbyterian Church



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New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 80 Wabash Avenue
Toronto: 25 Richmond Street, W.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street

FOREWORD

WE can contemplate the human soul either as it exists ideally in the divine mind or as it discloses itself in its present condition of infirmity. Neither aspect needs to exclude the other. The series of sermons printed in the following pages is more especially occupied with the former of the two.

It is doubtless the case that a disproportionate emphasis laid upon man's fallen condition tends to induce disrespect for his own nature and thus to discourage rather than to promote recovery to his proper and original estate. The author believes that it is quite as important to realize what it is in us to *become* as it is to realize what we just at present *are*.

C. H. PARKHURST.

New York City.

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I

HUMAN NATURE ON ITS GODWARD SIDE

"What is man?"—*Psalm 8 : 4.*

NOBODY knows. Singular, is it not, that a man can live with himself for half a century, in daily intercourse with himself, and still not begin to probe the mystery of his being? That is a fact to ponder over, to grow serious over. Here is my body, and I have what I call my thoughts, and my feelings, but what am *I?* What is it that these thoughts and feelings spring out from? Living all this time, all these many years, so close to myself and yet unable to get at myself. Easy enough to say what I think, what I want, what I do, but not one single intelligent word that can be spoken about the "*I*" that does it.

And all of that after more than fifty years. There is something in that fact that is just a little oppressive. People are saying, some people are saying, that because God cannot be gotten at there is no God. You cannot get at yourself a whit better. There is a sense in which agnosticism is valid in both cases. In Him as in us, and just as much in us as in Him, that underlying thing that we call the "personal" we can say not one suitable word about. And this circumstance properly creates in us a sense

that is very close to reverence. And in the course of this same Psalm David uses with reference to man language that is almost as exalted as any that is applicable to deity.

We are taught in school to say a good many things about ourselves, our minds, our consciousness, our subconsciousness, but that after all is only a learned kind of ignorance,—of which there is a great deal in the world,—dressing up our ignorance in the garments of an ambitious vocabulary; and handling such phrases is little other than removing one after another, the outer garments, far within which, closely clad, concealed in impenetrable investiture, lies the inaccessible "*I*."

This kind of regard, full of wonderment and even tinged with reverence, that I am just now encouraging you to cherish towards that inner sanctuary of our being, into which no man living has been able quite to enter, but that each thoughtful man feels is somehow *there*, has in it nothing that is inconsistent with the purest spirit of humility. Pride is not a plant that flourishes in such soil. Mystery is always subduing, even though it be the mystery in which our own innermost lies immured. Pride is of the accidents of life, its contingencies, things that lie along the surface, and out at the circumference. Pride blossoms only where the soil is scanty, and is a consciousness not of self but of some way in which we have exploited ourselves, of something we have been able to mark with our fingers or to tag with our name. People are proud of their money, of their

clothes, of their beauty. Like brilliant fire-weed pride grows best where there is not much to sustain it. But mystery brings quietness and lowliness of mind, be it the mystery of the outer firmament in which the great starry worlds are suspended in the impenetrableness of distance, or that other even more hidden world fast closed in the deeps of our own bosom.

Nor any more is the regard, full of wonderment, and even tinged with reverence, that I am just now encouraging you to cherish towards the inner sanctuary of our being, oblivious of the sad fact of human sin. But we must not think of sin as a part of what God originally made us to be. He certainly never formed us in a way such that He was obliged to feel a kind of moral contempt for us as soon as the work of forming us was done. Even a human architect convicts himself of incapacity who is compelled, immediately upon the completion of a work, to commence its repair. We are interested in that human mystery we call a soul as that mystery lay thought out in the mind of God before ever there was a soul, and as it stood forth expressed in the human fact upon which God is represented as speaking His benediction of "all very good." Sin is an interloper, was then and is now, and no more belongs to that inscrutable thing we call man than the disfigurement and disintegration that to-day distinguish the Acropolis at Athens are part of the original Parthenon and Erechtheum.

While then we ought not to ignore, and have no in-

tention of ignoring, that coating of corruption which, fungus-like, gathers along the edges of the original soul, yet hardly more important is it for us to realize the condition down *into* which we may have fallen than it is for us to appreciate the condition down *from* which we have fallen. Sin, however bad, never seems to us bad except to the degree that it is felt by us as distinct departure from the condition in which we were originally constituted to be.

I was talking only this last week with a man who to some extent has been wandering along forbidden paths, and the remorse which he was experiencing had its grounds not simply in the fact that his course during the few years past had been a depraved one. The depravity, in itself considered, was not what tormented him so much, but it was the fact that he had been born and reared in an earnest New England Christian home. He was less agonized by the thought of what he had become, than by remembering the high and beautiful estate he had abandoned in becoming it. There was a kind of anchorage-cable that held him back from the deeper waters of iniquity by the appreciation of what as a man it belonged to him to be.

It is the foreporch of greatness to realize that one ought to be great. It is the vestibule of nobility of soul to understand that nobility of soul is a man's true prerogative. There is no true shame for ignorance except as we have a deep suspicion that we ought not to be ignorant, but wise. There is no true shame for sin except as there is a profound

hidden understanding that sin is foreign to our true nature, that it is a form of disease inflicting itself upon a soul that is appointed to be in the possession of beautiful and eternal health.

And so we hold along the line of our present meditation, not out of *forgetfulness* that sin is bad, but out of the distinct *remembrance* that it is bad, and out of the conviction that the best way to appreciate it in its badness, is not to think too immediately and exclusively about the mean thing that we are all the time tempted to become, but to fasten our regards a little more constantly and affectionately upon the thing mysteriously great that it is our province to be and that it is our constitutional prerogative to be.

And even sin itself is one of the forms in which the mystery of the soul expresses itself; is one of the most evident proofs of the incalculable greatness of the soul. It is just by the native excellence of a thing that its corruption becomes possible. It is its excellence that creates room for its depreciation. Some things lack those qualities of value and beauty that render decay possible. The depth to which a thing can fall measures the height at which it stood before falling, just as it is told us that those who are now princes of darkness were once angels of light. Only an archangel is qualified to become a Satan.

It is a great thing to be endowed with a talent for becoming bad. Weathered rock may become disintegrated but without changing its quality, but when we come up into the higher existence of the plant and, still more, of the animal, decay means for it.

something offensive, gruesome, and the decayed body can be so repulsive because the living body is so beauteous. In the same way, sin looks both ways, up and down, just as far towards heaven as it does towards hell. A dog cannot sin, poor dog. He is not fine enough to be able to drop so low. So a faculty for sinning, for lying, for becoming vile is one of our greatest features of genius, one of the supreme tributes to our natural estate of exaltation. A dog obeys every law of the realm he is created into. He does not trespass; he cannot trespass. He cannot apostatize; he is not capable of falling from grace. Unhappy brute! It is infinitely better to be a wicked man than to be an innocent hyena. We ought to be prepared to thank God that we are so wondrously endowed as to be able to break the commandments.

There is something unspeakably magnificent in the audacity with which a man can look God in the eye and say to Him, "I won't." Perhaps you have not thought of it in that light; you ought to. Granting the personality of Satan, he is, next to God Himself, the most thrilling character known to history. How much like God he must once have been ever to be able to become His rival. In our little way we in the same manner betray the splendour of our native build. We confess to it that the laws of righteousness are edicts of God, and yet we every day tear up one or more of those edicts and throw them in the waste-basket. It is appalling, but it is superb. We could not do this unless, as David said, we were

"made only a little lower than the angels," or, as it stands in the revised reading,—"made but a little lower than God." One feels that he is treading on safe ground when he has the Scripture for it.

All of this opens a rift into the vast clouded mystery of our inner being. It makes us look at ourselves wonderingly; it makes us think of ourselves with large, long thoughts. We are humbled in our own presence. We are subdued by the unfathomable mystery that we ourselves are. What is man? Nobody knows, and it is perhaps a lesson that even the eternal years will not be long enough to teach.

And it is in great variety of ways that this tantalizing mystery that we *are*, that this almost infinite and unexplored realm which each man calls "*I*," gives intimations of itself. Man is the only earthly creature that can stand upon the ground and under the sky and feel that, in spite of all the illimitable vastness of things, he is in some very certain sense still vaster, something central while everything else becomes merely circumferential. Personality commences at that point, in the feeling that a man has—be his brains more or fewer—the feeling that he has, that he is *the* thing and everything else but a part of his environment, and that whatever may be the crushing energy of the material enginery of the world, he is competent to fling at that enginery the challenge of his own personal imperialism. And while he may be a little slow to assert his physical mastery over avalanches, earthquakes and cyclones, there is no spot of earth, sea or sky into which and over

which he does not feel equal to stretching lines of personal mastery and intellectual conquest.

And so without misgiving or embarrassment he stands up in the face of the world and with a daring almost verging on impudence commences catechizing it. And if, like an unwilling witness, things terrestrial or even things celestial hold back their testimony, and urge defective memory or an alibi, he says, like the judge on the bench, that he is here to find out, and that it will be in the interest of truth as well as of the witness that the witness should recover his forgetfulness and reserve and come down with the facts. And there is scarcely a spot of territory, whether down here on this globe or out there in the sun-illumined or star-sprinkled spaces, that is not today being solemnly adjudged by some judicial tribunal, mercilessly hetchelled by some prosecuting attorney.

There is a great deal of human kingliness curled up in the steady, assured way in which investigation intrudes itself into nature's sanctuary, and leans against its altar, lunches on its mercy seat, criticises the designs wrought into its holy tapestries and computes the amount of metal in its consecrated utensils. It is all of it man's way of saying: "This is a big world, but I am bigger; it is a mystically written book, but I can decipher it."

And every day and every night the process is going on. Secrets below and secrets above resist the sharp intrusion, but they succumb to it. Man girdles the earth with his thought and travels through the

stellar distances with his science. One might almost say that the paths along which tread the inhabitants of other worlds, if there be such inhabitants, are tracked with the footprints of earthly investigators. We seem planted with the seeds of a kind of omnipresence and therefore are ruffled by the sight of any frontier not yet transcended. Wherever a man is put he wants to move out, and no matter how large the house he tenants he wants the shades drawn and the windows up. It is all a symptom of man's inward immensity trying to find a place so large that he will not be cramped by it.

And this skipping out among the stars and then coming home for a little while and writing a book about it, and putting in printer's ink what the stars are made of, their size, their weight, age,—whether juvenile or adult,—pressing back into the hoary years of the universe towards the infantile days when the morning stars first sang together, tracking the progress of events, or trying to, deciphering the wheel-marks made in old strata, or the flurry created in cosmic star-dust by the giant car of onward movement when the world's springtime was yet on,—well, there is a titanic audacity about it all that is to me superbly uplifting. Man may have failed in much that he has attempted. A good many diary memoranda he may have entered under the wrong day of the month, and may sometimes have blundered into the wrong century or even millennium, but there is a hugeness in the very venture that means hugeness in the man. A fool may be venturesome, but

there is a kind of boldness that is possible only to a Titan.

And not only can man traverse the universe with his thought, but he can harness it to his purposes. We are not afraid of the world any more in the old way in which men used to be afraid of her. We know how to take her. We know what she is planning to do before she does it; at least in many particulars we do. Eclipses, that used to drive men to distraction and pursue them into caves of the earth, we now inspect with our telescopes or smoked glass as leisurely and composedly as a lady through her opera-glass watches the performance on the stage. The forces that used to play about us like so many wild horses we have caught, a good many of them, filled their mouths with bits, and covered their backs and sides with draft-tackle and trained them down to service, carrying loads for us and doing our chores. Lightning, which still, to be sure, has to be dealt with with a measure of discretion, is nevertheless a good deal more our slave to-day than we are its slave, has been cowed into obedience to human commands, and, from being a source of terror, both reasonable and superstitious, has been reduced to the category of draft-cattle and chore-boys.

As seen against the sky we seem to be exceedingly minute, but physical contrasts of that kind do not touch the nerve of the situation, and discouraging suspicions of diminutiveness are never going to get the better of us till we commence letting our measure be calculated by some other standard than

that of the inward containings of our mind, the long outward reach of our thought, and the royalty of our purpose. That was why David in the earlier part of this Psalm gave way to a suspicion of human littleness. He undertook to compute human dimensions by an astronomical tape-line. He was oppressed by the small figure he made as outlined against the background of the heavens. But yardsticks are foreign to the account. It was a far greater thing to be David contemplating the heavens than to be the heavens making eyes at David. It is a greater thing to be able to think the heavens than it is to be the heavens.

And in a way all this scientific interpretation of created things brings us into a strange kind of kinship with God, and almost of companionship with Him, when we remember that such interpretation is another name for human mind treading in the pathway of God's mind. A natural law is a divine thought. To read accurately a natural event is to rehearse in our own mind the thought that was in His mind in planning that event. In contemplating the methods and expounding to ourselves the processes of nature our thought meets and runs along with the creative thought that works itself out in those methods and processes. He and we are thinking together. Our mind in such case may be quite minute and at the same time be able in a way to keep up with God's mind, just as the tiniest lady's watch may keep time with the great clock on the Parliament House at London or the Cathedral at Strassburg.

Linear dimension is not the thing to think about. Spirit and foot-rule have nothing to do with each other. The same light comes out of a dewdrop that comes out of the sun. The smallest bird that trills its infinitesimal melody utters occasional notes that would blend with the voluminous progressions of the grandest oratorio, or that would even chime in with the anthem of the heavenly host praising God and singing, "Glory to God in the highest." And as the little note of the bird fits the splendid symphony of the angel-choir, so thought is still *thought* everywhere, mind is *mind* in both worlds, the sea-shell yet hums the murmur of the sea whence it sprang, the younger star still moves in the orbit it learned while one with the parent-star from which it was born, God and man think in the same vernacular, the Father and His children understand each other, the hills and the mountains are divine thoughts done in stone, and in the heavens the interpreting mind of man calmly fronts and steadily reads the meaning of God, and in the scintillant paragraphs of the star-dotted sky, with a divine genius, spells out thoughts that lay eternal in the Great Mind before ever He said—"Let there be light."

And now, in a word, in one other way, still more distinct and impressive, as it seems to me, is the inherent grandeur of man attested and illustrated, in that, when the Eternal Spirit would come forth from the deep recesses of concealment, it found in Man, the Man of Nazareth,—but a man,—a being sufficiently elevated in tone, and sufficiently wide in ca-

paciousness, to serve as an abundantly roomy tenement for the Eternal Spirit's occupancy. Since that creative morning when man was framed after the likeness of his Maker no such overwhelming credentials to the inherent sublimity of the human was ever afforded as in that act of God by which He made a man, the man Jesus, to be not merely the representative of Himself, not merely the delegate of Himself, but made Him to be the *expression* of Himself,—His own infinite personality come out into visibility, humanness so tangent to deity, so instinct with the essentials of deity that a bundle of it could serve as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." Such is man,—Divineness run in a finite mould. The meaning of man is to be found by looking up, not down, in the firmament, not in the dust. The worm-theory of man might answer for the days of Job, but is singed into ashes under the hot light of incarnation.

This then is the address that we have to make to ourselves: "Soul, patterned after the Everlasting Father, offspring of God! stand up to the dignity of your divine bequest." Oh! we could not live the life we are so many of us disposed to live, lives that are small, cringing, grasping, lustful, that have no ambition that transcends the grave, no eternity wider than to-day, no heaven but the impassioned world of our own animalism, or the sordid world of our own gettings and belongings, if we had but the beginnings of a sensitive appreciation of the dowry wherewith God has endowed us.

God be praised for the strings in our nature that still respond to the touch of noble appeal; for the intimations that, amid the darkness of conflicting passions, sometimes kindle along our horizon, like the low flashes that sometimes wink across our nightly landscape from out the area of a distant storm. O God, we are created in Thine image; we are Thy sons and Thy daughters. May the sense of it help to hold us, and the appreciation of what by Thine aid we can be, and of what by ordination of God we were designed and created to be, operate to make pettiness and unholiness of every kind seem to us despicable and horrible. Averted by this means from all evil, living in Thy fellowship, and in the companionship of that only which is wide, sincere and holy, may our growth be more and more towards Thee, and may we become in fact what we were in Thy thought when, in the early twilight of the world, Thou didst say, "Let us make man in our image."

II

DIVINE IRRIGATION

"Everything shall live whither the river cometh."—*Ezekiel 47 : 9.*

THE fringe of green, that borders every flowing brook, pictures in a pleasant way the thought that the prophet here aims to tell. You remember how picturesquely the same thought is set forth in the scenery of the Twenty-third Psalm, where the "green pastures" are laid along the banks of the "still waters," and the verdancy of the fields felt to spring from the quiet saturation of the brook.

An example of this upon a wider scale is seen in the river-bank vegetation in Egypt, due to fertilizing sediment brought down by the Nile in its descent from the tropics. What are generally called the canals of the planet Mars are now supposed, by those competent to judge, to be belts of vegetation, vegetation that is induced by currents formed by the melting of the polar snows, too narrow to be themselves visible, but of sufficient volume to develop on either side stretches of vegetable life broad enough to come into telescopic view. "Everything shall live whither the river cometh."

This presents to us under a figure, pleasantly and easily to be understood, the intrusion into the world, and into human experience, of a certain current, a

certain life-current, variously denominated by us, perhaps, but which everywhere creates along its margin results that are the same sort of thing in the personal world that the "green" which edged the "still waters" in David's Psalm was in the world of verdure.

The thoughts of earnest people are very intensely centred upon this matter of life. It is the problem of the scientist; it is still more the problem of the physician, the philosopher, the artist, the Christian: life and the increase of it. The word "life" is but the label by which we attempt to signalize to ourselves and to others that strange thing which underlies all the choicest phenomena of the natural world and all the richest manifestations that compose the scenery of the world personal and spiritual.

Life even in the plant, and still more in the animal, is a marvel so marvellous as to stand to our thought clothed with a certain garb of sanctity. The careless destruction of a flower seems to us to be almost a crime, and the wanton crushing out of the life of a brute appears to most of us, presumably, a kind of vulgarity, an offense against that in us which is noblest, a close approach to sin. There is that mystery attaching to life that beckons our thought so far away into the region of the unknown as to carry that thought, as always, into the domain of the religious. And so life is thought of by us as being not only mysterious but holy, and the river of the water of life to have its rise fast by the throne of God.

That then is the point from which we desire to date our devout meditation,—life, the intrusion into the world of a divine current, that everywhere fringes its borders with all those varieties of floral spiritual beauty that make out the charm of the landscape of human being and experience. So that the supreme cry of the human heart needs to be,—More life! so having fulfilled in us the mission with which our Lord was charged who came into the world "that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly."

And this matter of our being divinely irrigated, of our being saturated with a more abundant infusion of the flow past us and through us of the God-current, must not be understood by us in any limited way, in any one exclusive sense. In the vegetable world the flowers that owe their vigour and beauty to the baptism of the brook are of all species and complexions, unlike one another in their allurements, but all precious because they are vital, and because they admit of that enlargement and enrichment that accrues from the access to them of the living current. And it is in a way similarly wide and comprehensive that we shall interpret the diversity of those flowers of the personal life to whose increased stature and enhanced beauty it is the province of the waters of the river of life to contribute.

To whatever the fact may be due, it is an undoubted fact that the minds of men are more and more gathering to the thought that however dissimilar the vitality of the human body and the flowing

current of the divine life may seem to be, there is nevertheless that congeniality between them, and some residuum of identity relating them, that makes God's life naturally capable of reinforcing the human physical life-current and of so strengthening the tidal flow of that current as to enable it to loosen and then to break up and to carry down-stream the barriers accumulated by the disorders developed in the bodily system.

There is no believing Bible-reader that denies that that is exactly what divine power showed itself interested to do and capable of doing in the day of our Lord. The purpose of Christ's wonder-works of that kind was at least twofold, perhaps threefold. It aimed to demonstrate the fact that bodily disease was abnormal, not that it did not exist but that it was abnormal. It aimed to demonstrate the fact that God did not want people to be sick. It aimed to demonstrate the fact that when disease came in the way of God's power it had to go, and that a sick body was a kind of sewage system that could be made pure by being divinely flushed.

Christ's works of healing were evidently too numerous to warrant our supposing that they were done merely to demonstrate to the public the extent of His curative power: and also too numerous to allow of the supposition that He healed human bodies merely as a means of leading men's thoughts up to the idea of His being the physician of the soul,—a kind of ladder by means of which they could climb to the higher conception.

So far from that kind of service being a mere contingency of His mission to men, He Himself emphasizes it as being no inconsiderable part of His mission, and when He would have John the Baptist convinced that He was the Christ, five out of the six proofs that He would have His disciples make use of in persuading John of His Messiahship had to do with the curing of bodily ailments.

And when we take into account the additional fact that Christ's apostolic successors were competent to continue the same line of operation and did continue it, and taught it as a part of Christian doctrine and life, we hardly seem at liberty to ignore all that is herein involved, if indeed we be prepared to stand up to the full import of what is Scripturally set down for us. We are terribly afraid to assent to anything that surpasses the frontier of our easy comprehension. If men had not been more heroic in their adventures along material lines than they have been along moral and spiritual ones, we should still be clad and millinered in the simplicity of our earliest ancestry and be creeping alongshore in the same sort of naval curiosities that helped mankind through the crisis of the Noachian deluge.

We ought to be willing whole-heartedly to accept it as an essential part of our religion that there are no limits that can be set to the power of the divine life, and as said before, if we are New Testament Christians we ought to accept the New Testament Scriptures as prescriptive of the directions in which the divine life is everywhere and at all times ready to

operate. When we are told by the apostle that " He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you," we may be constrained to feel that the complete fulfillment of that promise requires to be relegated to the future, but if the indwelling Spirit of God is so related to bodily life that it can work a complete resurrection by and by, it is so related to the bodily life that it can work a young resurrection now, and that was what God's Spirit was doing all the way through Christ's ministry historically set down in the written Gospels.

For we are very infirm in our grasp upon the intention of the Gospel if we think of the three years of the God-man ministry as anything other than the prelude to a divine oratorio permanently continued. Those years and what occurred in them, are no relics, no curious anomalies to be relegated to the museum of religious antiquities. They are the momentary flash of everlasting realities; the rift in the cloud that gives us a glimpse of the heavens in all the unvarying beauteousness of blue with which the whole circumference of years and centuries is canopied.

That is the way we are to interpret the Gospel. It is a Gospel true to even date. It is the uncovering, valid for all time, of the processes of God's mind, of the movings of God's heart, of the activities of His power. So that what He did in those three Christ-years is only a way of showing to us what He is all the time doing, or ready to do, and a way of exhibiting the current of divine life that, to those who will

be laved by its touch, flows ever quickeningly along, meeting us at all grades of our being from the corporeal up. "*Everything* liveth whither the river floweth." Bodily renewal, physical emancipation from the thraldom of disease that is abnormal,—that then is one of the flowers appointed to leaf and bloom on the margin of the "still waters," and to be freshened by the side of the waters of the river of life.

That, however, is but one out of many illustrations of the principle stated in our text. Physical renewal is only one, and that perhaps the least alluring, of the flowers that stand up in beauteous and fragrant blossom where God's living waters are flowing by. There is not a single energy contained in the manifold personality of each of us that is not constituted in such a way as to be able to absorb into itself an irrigating baptism, a quickening impulse, entering directly from the waters of the river of life.

This fact in its relation to *mental* power and activity is expressed in the old maxim, not heard spoken now as often as once,—"To have prayed well is to have studied well." For the service of prayer is first of all the act of coming into divine contact, lying up close against God's influence, as the roots of the flowers, along the edge of the watercourse, yield themselves to the gentle saturation. "To have prayed well is to have studied well,"—is to have made great entrance into that realm of reality in which the mind of man aspires to be at home.

For in such hour of holy access the pulses of

thought are quickened, the current of thought is somehow deepened and accelerated. We need have no theory as to the detailed manner of the quickening. In our season of intellectual research the pressure upon us of even a warm and urgent *human* intelligence works within us a small miracle of stimulation and entrancement, and how much more must this be the case when we are being mentally told upon by the pressure of the infinite mind, and are being refreshed at the fountain of infinite supply.

In such moment of high uplift we are not only able in a way to think with an energy of insight divinely made over to us, but the very significance of truth becomes itself enhanced. It is seen lying out in the light with something more of its intrinsic beauty and import. Truth does not denote quite all that it might till it is experienced in its relations to the divine mind. It is only in that way that the entire domain of truth can be regarded by us in its coherency.

Up to that moment particular items of truth evince themselves to us in their disinterested separateness. Each such item stands before us unguaranteed, and able to be thought of by us as being merely a shadow cast by our own mind instead of being something that is substantial and that is suffused with the essence of the eternal. But with God in the mind, His breath warm upon us, the current of His infinite thought flowing past us, truth instantly assumes to us the character of something tremendously real, indestructible, and the conquest of a truth, the acquisition of a

possession that will continue to make us wealthy till the death of the God in whom all truth inheres.

And it is to just that kind of holy *enthusiasm* that is to be accorded the name inspiration. The very word "enthusiasm" as the Greek understood it (Ev Oeos) "God in us," means inspiration. It means the tide of the divine mind projecting itself along the narrow channel of human thought, till the channel overflows and overspreads surrounding country with the abundance of fruitful inundation. The utterances of prophets are the brimmings of full souls that God has filled to the point of overflow.

And inspiration is the prerogative of every man that stands on the windward side of the Omniscient. You know very well how, in the old days, and in some later days, the baptismal touch has made ordinary men great; how it has scattered mists out of the eye and clouds out of the air; how it has uncovered to small hearts the secrets of God and let minds, as little as yours and mine, into God's confidences.

And I would like to add that therein lies the supreme need of our educational institutions to-day, all the way up from the primary school to the university. We have no end of educational apparatus for storing empty minds with facts, and for limbering up the mental muscle by educational gymnastic. But that does not make men nor women either. There is nothing so barren or so empty as a stuffed mind. All the way up and down our schools are substantially godless. Things, facts, truths are viewed

through the smoky atmosphere of common material living. There is some mental nervousness and intellectual hustling, but the truths that are dealt out are not so held in the pure and sweet open as to become iridescent with the light dropping upon them from the firmament. The enthusiasm is a man-made enthusiasm and not a divine inspiration. Truths are not felt in the breadth of their range and in the eternity of their reach.

And because the quality of the schools determines the quality of the times, the times are bad. The commercialism of our educational institutions, the bread-and-butter aspect of the whole business, the pettifogging devotion paid to microscopic details, the contemplation of things in their unrelated attitude to the grand whole, the emphasis upon matter to the exclusion of spirit, the consciousness of the atom to the neglect of the universe and to the neglect of the Almighty who has taken the universe for His throne of power and His chamber of love, scrutinizing a starbeam without tracing back its glittering track to the celestial orb it was shot from;—all of that is contributing cause to the materiality of our civilization, a civilization in which man is all and God nowhere; time everything and eternity still unborn; body the whole of our humanness and soul a myth: and bread, trinkets and money the sum total of available assets. The supreme beauty of earth is its heavenliness and it takes a great deal of God to make a man.

It will be a third illustration of the principle ex-

pressed in our text to say that it is only as they are irrigated by the waters of the river of life fast by the throne of God, that our purposes of life can be strengthened into vigour and vitalized into forms of perfect beauty. It is not difficult to understand that the large intentions of our lives are invariably sustained upon the basis of a religious impulse. There are none of the more important movements, either of our minds or of our affections, that do not involve the tacit recognition of a certain indestructible value and a certain reliable steadfastness in things, so arguing the existence and the supremacy of some sort of eternal groundwork and support.

Not a great many people, perhaps, think carefully enough to realize as they might, that pretty much everything that we do, think or feel has its significance, guaranteed to us by a lurking suspicion that in that act, thought or passion is an element of meaning that means eternally; that there is in things something that is infinite; that fluctuation and change are simply a complexion worn by the unfluctuating and the changeless; and that just as when we walk we put our feet down confidently because we feel the ground's stability and know that the whole gravitating intention of the globe is pledged to hold our foot fast once it is planted, so in the larger walk of life, in our dealing with the greater facts, and what we name the more important causes and concerns of our own and the general life, we have a sense more or less distinct that those are things that can be counted on, that what we call a good cause, or a commendable

enterprise, is instinct with a kind of spirit that we might venture to call an immortal spirit; so that when we commit ourselves to such an enterprise there is a feeling of having gone aboard a train whose track runs on into the everlasting centuries.

We may not always think of these things as having God for their grand underlying guarantee, but whatever the dimness of our thought about it, this feeling of the permanent value of a splendid cause, and of its deathless import, is simply at bottom the religious sense, is simply at bottom that experience of an underlying God, which has not yet become wide awake enough to know itself as religion and as trust in the durability of the great Eternal.

Cite for instance the intellectual development of men, the æsthetic refinement of men, the moral uplift of men; development, refinement, uplift are values, we bank on them: they are treasures in a bank that never will be broken. We feel it: we feel it tremendously and are inspired by the fact of it, for there is in the feeling the twilight appreciation of some immense underlying omnipotence of mind and heart that in our finer and higher moments we spell, "The Almighty Father."

So that the soul-surrender of ourselves to such an interest becomes an act of piety and a form of worship and the grand purposes so entertained by us become religious purposes, flowers that indeed stand along the brook-side waiting always to be watered from the fountain of divine irrigation. And just as the moisture of the "still waters" stimulates the life of the

brook-side plant, and helps to build it up in stature and in the luxuriance of growing and blossoming, so it is by the influx into our fine and exalted purposes of the current of the divine life, that those purposes grow big and staunch, full of wealth and assurance, triumphant even in the moment of defeat because consciously broadened into sympathy and union with God's purpose which never can fail and which is forever moving on in slow grandeur of advance, checked by no steps of retreat.

And it is that feeling of moving upon ground that is unshakable, with a push behind that comes directly down from the throne of the Omnipotent, that makes out the success, the joy and the constant triumph of our service. For there is no good working that is not warmed by the realizing sense that every stroke upon the stone we are moulding contributes to the consummation of the final building as it lies modelled in the mind of the supreme architect. For as another has said,—"Give me the man who believes in the ultimate triumph of truth over error, of harmony over discord, of love over hate, of purity over vice, of light over darkness, of life over death. Such men are the true builders."

"*Everything* liveth whither the river cometh." Our cry then is to have the roots of our life held closely fast to the touch of the "still waters," that in all the ranges of our life and its services this weakness of ours may be divinely thrilled into strength, that our narrowness may be widened out into concord with God's great intentions, that, as with the

prophet at Dothan, there may be such entrance into our eye of the divine light as shall erase the mistiness of our vision and enable us to behold the presence and working of the celestial energies that are achieving the purposes of God; and first and last of all, that every drooping flower of grace that is planted in our hearts may be so moistened that it shall be straightened up into erectness of stature and take upon itself those features of form and colour that shall make it beautiful to the eye of man and dear to the heart of God.

III

THE HEALING OF THE LEPER

"And behold there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."—*Matthew 8: 2–3.*

LEPROSY is contagious. At least so claimed by Hansen and Dragnat-Landré,—who are authorities. Jesus touched the leper and was not infected. The saltness of the sea cannot creep up into the river when the tidal flow of the river is pouring itself down into the sea. Cleanness has to be a little unclean before uncleanness can soil it. Power must needs be a little enfeebled before feebleness can debilitate it. Christ was in a way physically divine as well as spiritually divine. Divineness as applied to the spirit means perfect holiness. Divineness as applied to the body means perfect health. The two words, "health" and "holy," come from the same root and mean somewhat the same thing.

So that there was no danger that contact with the leper would communicate to Jesus the leper's disease. It means a great deal that Jesus could not have become a leper by touching a leper. It means that sickness is the shadow cast by sin; perhaps not the sin of the invalid, but somebody's sin; and that only

by being whole,—that is, holy,—in our souls, can we become whole,—that is, healthy,—in our bodies. There was a vast reason why Jesus, on another occasion, said to the impotent man whom He had healed,—"Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." There is many a dismal shadow that has overcast the earth only because of the corruption in the human heart. There is fact as well as fiction in the story of the thorns that grew in the furrows of Adam's sin. Perhaps this present world would be beautiful enough if we could erase from it the trail of the serpent, and we may reasonably expect that "Paradise Regained" will come in as fast as the sin goes out that was the occasion of "Paradise Lost."

It is another feature, incidental to the main intention of the story, that by putting His touch upon one infected with leprosy Christ practically declared Himself independent of ecclesiastical statute, for by the law of Moses he who touched a leper became himself unclean. Christ's attitude in the situation was a way He had of stating that He was His *own* statute, and that life, a live soul, is itself prescriptive of law. That is only to say that the same principle obtains in the personal world that everywhere operates in plant and animal existence. The plant shapes itself, puts on leaves, colours itself, blossoms and fructifies, not by the requirement of any outwardly imposed statute, but by the law of its own interior life. It legislates for itself as it goes along, and the finer and fuller its life the richer will be the terms of its legislation.

The immensity of the life that was in the soul of

Jesus did not admit of its being cramped within the limitations of a Judaistic prohibition. Soul is itself the measure of its authority and of its prerogatives. It is the expanding life of the unhatched bird that shatters its confining shell, and the principle holds everywhere from the swelling and bursting wheat-grain to the emancipation wrought out in the spirit of the Son of God. That is what "liberty" means as the word stands written on the pages of the Gospel. It does not mean at all exemption from the authority of law; it means obedience, but obedience to the law of a renewed mind, obedience to the statutes that the soul has itself enacted for itself under the impulse of the God-soul that has lodged itself in the human soul,—law where the legislative process proceeds from within outward instead of from without inward. That is what we have to understand by the transition from Judaism to Christianity.

That was what the prophet Jeremiah saw was coming. Prophets always see ahead of their times; they see ahead of their times because they have an eye that so grasps the nature and the tendency of things as to be able to know what that nature and tendency are sure to issue in. And so the prophet said "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a *new* covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. I will put My law into the *inward* parts and write it in their *hearts*." It is as though Jehovah had said, "I will have the living impulse that is lodged within them work out their statutes for them instead of having them proceed under the re-

straints and constraints of statutes externally riveted upon them." I want to say that we make far too little of this principle, and continue to be slaves after we have had the proclamation of emancipation divinely edited and published for us.

We have no business to be plodding along in the treadmill of Mosaism, doing this thing and not doing that other thing because somebody back there in Arabia constructed a cast-iron Decalogue for us. The Psalmist writes about the *beauty* of holiness, but there is no beauty in cast-iron holiness. The poet pouring forth the irrepressible fullness of his soul in memory of his dear friend Arthur Hallem, says:

> "I do but sing because I must
> And pipe as do the linnets sing."

Shell Shattered at the Pressure of the Life Swelling Inwardly

Outward activity, as in this instance of Jesus, breaking away from the confined channel of traditional obligation, and running out and flowing over in a fertilizing inundation of generous act, because a spring freshet has dropped down from the uplands and filled the channel to the bursting of its banks,—what a picture of life that is, life that is so large and exuberant that it can afford to take counsel with itself, to disdain manufactured obstacles, to laugh in the face of proprieties that are merely fictitious proprieties, and to be like those gigantic roots in the forest that will steal into the crevices of the rocks, pry the boulders

apart and operate with the irresistibleness of slow dynamite.

Christ Himself illustrates all this by the memorable figure of the new wine and the old wine-skins. Something is bound to give way when expansive life is kept boxed in an old casket. And what the incoming into the world of this fuller life in the person of Jesus has already accomplished in the way of rending the fetters in which human thought and ambition had been bound, that we must each of us have achieved in our separate and personal experience. It is not a matter of artificially knocking off fetters. That is dangerous. The poultry-man kills the bird by breaking the bird's shell. The bird must by the push of its swelling life burst its own shell. In human life there is quite too much artificial shell-breaking,—renouncing statutes simply because we have decided we do not like them: throwing away opinions and doctrines merely because it is easier not to have opinions and doctrines.

It all turns on the richer fullness of the interior flow. Christ did not disregard the prohibition to touch the leper because He wanted to show His contempt for the statute. For Him the wealth of His own life repealed the statute. He was like a vessel riding the deep sea; all underlaid with rocks the sea may be, but for that vessel there are no rocks; the vastness of the deep waters on whose surface its course is swung practically obliterates the rocks, and bears the vessel forward in the confidence of infinite security.

The expansive and in consequence the explosive power of life inwardly fostered has afforded of itself a wide variety of illustrations both on the larger and on the smaller areas of life and history. In the earlier part of Christ's ministry He seemed trying to keep in with the old traditional methods. He frequented the synagogue and preached there. He took care to link His instruction as closely as He could to the inherited doctrines brought down from the old days. But it was not a success. He began soon to criticise those doctrines. It was not a great while before He ceased to find Himself comfortably at home in the synagogue. After a little the mountain and the boat, moored alongside the shore of Gennesaret, had to furnish Him a pulpit. The wheat-grain is beginning to crack under the pressure of the swelling life it contains. There is a rent in the old wine-skin under the crowding of the fresh fermentation.

The same scene was enacted in the life-work of Luther and of the reformers who preceded him. It was not at all their thought, at the outset, to break with the Papacy. But the development of reform ideas and the enlarged spiritual conceptions and life that those ideas fostered became expanded to such a degree that the hard limitations of the Papacy were insufficient for the strain. The new wine burst the old wine-skin and Protestantism set itself forth as a distinct cult, a life throbbing with too intense a spirit to be containable within the enslaving grip of Roman Catholic shackles.

The same experience was reproduced in the history of Methodism. The rich and generous spirituality of Wesley was too expansive to endure, without fretting and chafing, the torturing confinements of High Church Anglicanism. So long as his soul remained nearly as sluggish as the Anglican souls around him he could cherish the hope of remaining on the inside of Anglican limitations and continuing his ministry there, and he could criticise Whitefield for being so lawless a heretic as to presume to preach Christ's Gospel out of doors instead of confining himself to a consecrated building. But there is something in life, in enlarging and deepening life, that is pretty difficult to put a check upon. Iron bands are strained by it, rocks are rent by it, and the stiffness of ecclesiastical organization crumpled and crumbled into fragments by it, and under the incubation of the divine Spirit Wesleyan life pecked its way through the shell of Anglicanism and became the free plumed bird that history knows as Methodism. That is the way that things always go on where there is life, and where there is life there is fomenting and deepening in the intensity of its vitality.

And all true advance made by the individual in his own personal being and experience is modelled after the same pattern. It holds in the matter of our opinions, opinions in reference to common things. Simply renouncing such opinions, however small and meagre they be, is so perillous as to be almost a sin. It is playing with truth to deal with any kind of opinion in that brusque and arbitrary way. Better

have any kind of opinion than no opinion. For any opinion, no matter how small, is big enough to contain all the life that is required as candidate for the divine incubation; and there is no life so minute as not to be in easy reach of immensity if God only broods it. You cannot calculate what will be the size of the bird from the size of the shell it hatches from.

It is by such process, likewise, that we are to outgrow the limitations of a confined theology. However disdainfully we may speak of theology, we all have one. It is the form of thought in which we express our experience of religious realities. And if we have any experience and also know at all how to think, the theology comes. And simply to renounce theology as so many a negative young man or woman is doing is not the way to achieve results. If you are dissatisfied with your theology the presumption is that the world of religious idea you are living in is too small for you. But simply to throw away that world, except by the process of an enlarging spiritual life that will usher you into another world that is just as positive and at the same time a great deal larger and more productively beauteous, is death, just as it is death to peel off the shell from a bird that has not yet expanded sufficiently to be ready to hatch.

The expedient of an inner life and an expanding inner life is our only security. Young men and young women who are pluming themselves upon immunity from settled forms of conviction and who are priding themselves upon the thoroughness with which they have renounced all settled opinion upon

holy matters do not realize what sort of chancery it is that their religious insolvency is being carried through.

I am not objecting at all to the shattering of old religious notions provided it comes at the impulse of life that is expanding and not as the aftermath of life that is drying and contracting. That is the way that growth in religious idea has always come, not by the negative process of renunciation, but by the positive process of expansion,—cherishing opinions already held, but cherishing them in that character of elasticity that enables them to enlarge themselves to the contour of the inwardly contained life that goes always on expanding.

This is another of those respects where "Everything liveth whither the river floweth." Everything great in the concerns of what is personal turns upon the matter of life, and more and more of it. St. Paul says,—"When I became a man I put away childish things." He does not say,—"When I put away childish things I became a man." Don't you see the difference? Don't you see the difference between getting over being small by becoming great, getting rid of what is petty by being vitally nourished up into stature,—the difference between that and attempting to be big by the mere process of pulverizing that in you which is meagre and microscopic, growing big by trying to attenuate your diminutiveness? Keep on the positive side of things, young man and young woman. Life, life on the increase, is the solvent of all our difficulties.

There is still one more feature of this miracle that calls for attention, and that is that Christ here sets the enginery of heaven at work to minister to a poor creature that was as helpless, as hopeless and apparently as worthless and as God-forsaken, as any specimen of humanity possibly could be; a human thing comprehensively bankrupt, seemingly destitute of all faculty for doing good, and seemingly destitute of all capacity for receiving good; humanness that was sunk into a condition of everlasting rot. That was what the leper was, and heaven smiled on the living carcass. The Great Father in the person of Jesus Christ put His strong clean arms around him, put His sweet finger on the rot, grasped him in a divine embrace that held together the mushy limbs that were sloughing off; thrilled him with an amount of God-life that created for him an ante-mortem resurrection and set him forth once more on the upward highway that was charged with earthly and eternal promise.

A serious part of the infirmity of current Christianity, and of the inefficiency of the existing Christian Church consists in our failure to appreciate the significance of the individual man considered apart from his contingencies, I mean by that considered apart from that which is fundamental to him as a person. We believe in a man who is educated or who abounds in this world's goods, or who is refined, or who is well connected, but it requires an appreciation of things that is wider and more profound than most of us are possessed of, to be able to believe in a man simply because he is a man. The

world understands this, and the less fortunate element of community are not left in ignorance as to the attitude of mind towards them of those more favourably situated, and the result is the existing schism, upon religious territory, now subsisting between the upper and the lower social strata. The Church exerts to-day but a minimum of influence over what we have learned to know as the masses.

Now no movement that aims at world-wide results is strong except as it has its roots in the hearts of the common people. In Christ's day it *was* rooted there. If it had commenced with the emperors it would not have worked down to the underlying multitudes; but having commenced with the multitudes it did work up to the overlying emperors. The strength of the Church, no more than the strength of the country, is to be estimated by its culture and wealth. So far as relates to development along intellectual lines the movement will be from above down; so far as relates to development along the deeper lines of sentiment and passion the movement will be from below up. What we might call the every-day classes are fundamental in all that relates to the world's true history, and in society as in the tree, the sap proceeds upward from the root. And the more a movement like Christianity becomes the rather exclusive possession of the more favoured classes the weaker becomes the movement and the more discouraging its future.

And all of that is one of the critical lessons that we learn by keeping our attention close riveted upon the career and policy of Jesus Christ. We must con-

stantly consult not only the doctrine but also the method of Christ, for there is as much of the divine wisdom in one as in the other. And one of the tremendous elements of Christ's power in all the matter of His working and planning is this, that He understood and felt keenly what that is which constitutes a man's primary worth and that understanding of His and that feeling of His are not reduplicated in the mind and heart of the average Christian of the present moment. And even if we succeed in adopting His understanding of the matter, that understanding of His is in very rare instances accompanied by any of His intense and impassioned appreciation of the matter.

When Christ looked upon a man the thing that filled up His angle of vision was the man's soul, with everything that the possession of a soul indicates for the years temporal and for the ages eternal. You and I are not in the habit of looking upon him in that way and we are not fit to deal with him and not competent to do anything substantial for him till we do. It is a great thing to have a soul with all that soul imports: to be an heir of the years that are yonder and everlasting; to be charged with possibilities which, whether largely unfolded yet or not, admit of development so ample that only an infinitude of time can bring them to their complete finish and fruitage; to be created in God's image, a young duplicate of the Almighty and the Omniscient; offspring of the great God; what do you think of that? —able to think, even if but a little way, along the

lines where God's thought has run on before, and to have heart-beats that can keep time with the pulse that throbs in the bosom of the heavenly Father.

That is something of what it means to have a soul. And when you take all the contingencies of a man, the amount of education he may happen to have, the amount of money he chances to be possessed of, or the quality of his ancestry or social relationship, and lump them together, they are, as against a soul, but as an ant-hill to a mountain, in the comparison ; and yet it is the ant-hill upon which men base their estimates and in view of which they determine their policy.

It is almost discouraging that after two thousand years the tremendous things of our religion have taken so feeble a hold upon the thought and heart of the Church that they are outweighed and overmastered by matters stupidly paltry in their significance, and what significance they do have, limited to the duration of just a little handful of swift years. Think of the entire South rising up in a mutiny because a white bishop asked a black bishop to eat with him! God have mercy on the South, and on the mental and moral lunacy into which the bigotry of its superciliousness has precipitated it.

We can and ought to make a certain allowance for prejudices that have become ingrained by the traditional tuition of multiplied years. But there is a point beyond which prejudice becomes scandalous and damnable, and it is of just that prejudice that the recent outcry at Richmond was the proclamation. It

was a case where pigment denoted more than a soul fashioned upon the pattern of God's soul and destined to eternal fellowship with the Trinity and the angels. Such bigotry requires to have sent down to it not merely missionaries that will preach the sweet Gospel of Christ who loved and was willing to die for men just simply because they are men, but requires to have ordinary school-teachers sent down to it, that shall quicken slow-footed intelligence with an ability to keep up with the truth and to appreciate the difference between values that are indefinitely unequal; skin against an immortal soul! Pigment against heirship to an inheritance bequeathed to the children of God!

But unfortunately the South has not the monopoly of this unholy bigotry. Even among Christians of the North class lines are drawn just as sharply as racial lines are drawn in Richmond and New Orleans. The following two incidents are stated authoritatively:—"A wealthy girl in a New York church wishing to do practical Christian service offered her help in the church's mission Sunday-school. She soon found it necessary to stop"—it was so embarrassing to meet her girls at work behind shop counters and not be able to recognize them. "At a Sunday morning service in a Fifth Avenue church the pastor had received several young married people into fellowship. He requested the church-members to call. 'I ask this,' said he, 'as the recognition of your relations within the church; it will not in the least, you understand, involve social recognition.'"

These two cases are doubtless extreme and sharply exceptional, but, my friends, we have got the roots of the same narrow, unchristian, unsweet bigotry in us that disclosed itself at Richmond and that betrayed itself in that Fifth Avenue church pastor. We are none of us overwhelmed as Christ was, and made infinitely tender by our experience of the sweet and inestimable preciousness of things that are wealthy with a value that figures cannot numerate. We are not immersed in the depths of what it means to be a soul budded all full with splendid possibilities, candidate for membership in the society of heaven, in the line of promotion to position of large trust in the City of God. We see the man dirty and ill-clad and we know he is poor and ignorant, and there our thought of him stops. We have not the passion for God's jewels that will prompt us imaginatively to rub off the dust that hides the diamond.

Oh! for more of the vision of Christ that we might see things just as they are! Oh! for more of the yearning tenderness of Christ that we might love man just as he is!

IV

CELESTIAL PROSPECTS

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory when there came such a voice to Him from the sublime glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—*2 Peter 1 : 16–17.*

PETER'S reference, of course, is to the view he gained of the majesty of Christ and of things celestial, at the scene of the Transfiguration. That scene is one that is set forth in very simple terms by the gospel writers, but one which must have created an epoch that never could fade from the memory of those that were its witnesses; one not only that could never fade from memory, but that must remain forever and ever as a brilliant disclosure and a stimulating impulse in the experience of those that were admitted to the holy and mystic occasion.

In attempting to understand what must be the value of such an event to those that were its beholders, it is worth noting that to only three of the disciples was there allowed a share in the vision. It is a question if the other nine would have seen anything if they had been present; otherwise why should the nine have been refused participation in a

privilege that would have been fraught to them with everlasting blessing and power?

The question, why Peter, James and John should have been thus exceptionally favoured, is not one that it is difficult to answer, and the answer is of more than academic interest, because it involves principles that are as relevant to people living now as it was to those who were disciples then. In matters of natural prospect we can see only those things that we are visually prepared to see. An object may have a definite existence, and a definite material existence, such as the atmosphere, for example, without the eye being able to take cognizance of it. Its invisibility is not the fault of the atmosphere, but is due to optical infirmity. It is that infirmity that gives occasion for microscopes and telescopes.

It is conceivable that there are a great many features, belonging to physical objects, that are so unrelated to any of the five senses with which we are endowed, that they lie quite outside the reach of our present powers of perception. Perhaps it will be part of the result of the process of development carried forward in us in the times and ages to come, that new and unsuspected charm will blossom out upon us from the world of nature, as new powers of perception,—senses additional to those that we now know how to exercise,—become patent and operant in us,—the world always growing richer in the manifestations it makes of itself to us, according as there is wrought in us a richer and richer preparedness for appreciating those manifestations.

Even if you think that a little fanciful,—which I do not,—the reference will serve its purpose by illustrating the principle just now of concern to us, that visibility depends as much on us as it does on things, that our inability to see a thing is no kind of proof that the thing is not there. As when it is written in the 119th Psalm,—"Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law:" which means that the wondrous things are in the law whether human eyes are open to them or closed to them. Or as when Elisha, in the anxieties of battle, was concerned that his terrified servant should realize the sufficiency of God's power and the abundance of the celestial resources, and prayed and said, "Lord, I pray Thee open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw, and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." Which indicates that the sky was thronged with forces of divine deliverance, quite independently of the ability of the young man, or of any one else, to observe and appreciate those forces.

Practically speaking, the world is as large or as small as we make it; as empty or as full as we make it. As much in it as we have eye to see and heart to realize. David in his authorship of the twenty-third Psalm conceived the spirit of the Gospel one thousand years before Christ. Isaiah's fifty-third chapter is as evangelical as the Gospel of St. John. "The Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world" and the genius of the cross has always been to the

men who could see it. The spiritual world is as full of disclosure as the sky is of light, and instead of puzzling why it is that the revelations made to us are not more abundant, the sweet obligation that is upon us is to widen out under the sky that is already arched above us and to grow up towards the light that is already munificently shed upon us. It is part of the constitution of the human soul to be planted with large possibilities of vision, and heaven draws closer to us only just as fast as we draw nearer to heaven. And we doubtless state the full truth in the case when we claim that the three disciples that Jesus took up with Him into the shining heights of the Mountain of Transfiguration were the only ones out of the twelve that were spiritually prepared to enter into the meaning of a scene spiritually disclosed or to detect the spiritual presence of the august personages there revealed.

And when we thoughtfully consider the fact that there have been so many during the history of the last three thousand years whose thoughts and experience, as they have reported it to us, have far transcended the frontiers that bound the vision of most of us, and whose report of their experience we have no just right to question, it brings us very close to this sweet but at the same time solemn thought, that however deep the valley through which, in our commonplace experience, we are walking, and however heavily shadowed that valley may appear to be, we are nevertheless within no very distant reach of heights from which would be visible to us a prospect

that would read an altogether new meaning into life and into the sublimities of it.

If you will let me say it, it is one of the thoughts that is a growing one with me, that we are condemning ourselves to the restraints of unnecessary limitations, limitations that are artificial and self-imposed; that for reasons not quite easy to explain we are confining to channels, that are almost ignobly narrow, currents of thought and feeling that are tinged with the colours of a larger and richer destiny; that the human soul is equipped with wings as well as with feet; that the air as well as the ground is the proper and natural arena of human exploit, and that in these days, when physical science is teaching men the art of transportation along higher and more airy avenues of travel than have hitherto been available, we ought to give at least as much thought to finding for the human spirit highways of passage that shall lift its journeyings a little farther from the ground and a little nearer to the sky.

The Scriptures of the New Testament and of the Old also give to us inklings of spiritual potencies that interest us and fascinate us when we read of them, but that for some reason we are not sufficiently adventurous to be disposed in our own experience to actualize. We read the Gospel rather with the idea of curiously remarking the singular and mystic events transpiring in another continent and age of the world, than with the thought of finding in those events and in the experiences that accompanied them, a criterion of what life and experience is designed in all ages

and latitudes to be. There is an exceeding absence of what we might call spiritual ambition.

We are ambitious for money, for education, for clothes and jewels, for the refinements of the table and even of the arts. At the level of material things, if there is anything new to be discovered we want to discover it. If there is such a thing as a North Pole we send out expeditions to find it. If there are treasures of art buried in the ruins of demolished cities and temples we organize societies and commissions for their disinterment. If there are canals in Mars and intelligent beings there that have worked at the excavation of those canals, we send down into South America an observation corps equipped for bringing the latest reports from our Martian kindred. About all such matters we are neither slow, dull nor indifferent. And it is only in the presence of a realm as real as any of these, but not appreciable by even the most delicate material apparatus, that the human passion of research congeals into uninquisitiveness.

It is therefore that pretty nearly the most earnest of Christians relegate such a scene as this of the transfiguration to the realm of the abnormal, and rather carelessly consider that the assuring glimpse into things celestial gained by those who witnessed the unspeakable exposition was merely a passing feature of an exeeptional age, a necessity then, perhaps, but an impossible superfluity now. We are not in this arguing for the recurrence of humanly witnessed transfigurations carrying the exact features of the event celebrated in the Gospels. But without

that, or something bearing marks of essential resemblance, our Christianity is bound to be as destitute of sustaining assurance and of persuasive power as that of the original disciples would have been had their souls been fed only on common food, their eyes filled only with terrestrial light, and their lives nourished by nothing more heavenly and divine than every-day experience.

We are most of us looking for an improved condition of things. My reference is not to things local but to the world generally and to mankind as a whole. We say, and somehow we believe, that there is a good time coming. We most of us feel to say with Tennyson :—

> "I falter where I firmly trod,
> And falling with my weight of cares
> Upon the great world's altar stairs
> That slope through darkness up to God,
>
> I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
> And gather dust, and chaff, and call
> To what I feel is Lord of all,
> And faintly trust the larger hope."

We trust the larger hope. We are mainly optimists by the constitution of our own minds. But our optimism may be a mere unthinking hope, an expectation of things ever growing better and better merely because it is easier and pleasanter to think of the future in that light than it is to conceive of the years and the race as slipping down an inclined plane towards a destiny forever more desolate and sombre, or our optimism may be of a reasonable kind and

may feel the grounds of its own splendid anticipation. That is the only optimism that is really an augury of better days, and that can be taken as a weather-vane indicating the direction in which the everlasting winds are blowing.

If we are believers we say that our reliance is upon God. Yes, but how is our reliance upon God? That conception may be as idle and fruitless as the other. Reliance may be a positive matter and have in it an impulse of effect, or it may be a mere negation and be only euphemism for slothfulness and a disposition to take things for granted. I suppose that you and I have tracked the course of events enough to know that things do not better themselves, and we have probably discovered before this time that when the train of events is lifted upon a higher track, and taken along an upward grade, there was something involved in it beside the direct might of the Everlasting Arms; that even Jehovah does not pick the train up bodily and personally set it down upon a more elevated highway.

He doubtless enters the world, but His entrance is along the line of the inspired touch that He puts upon some human soul, the celestial thrill by which He animates the spirit of some human intermediary. He tells the secrets of His own heart to some human confidant, and so fills the soul of that confidant with the grandeur of the secret that the confidant is able to walk forth among men with the power of a divine vicegerent, a human finger through which God's arm puts its pressure upon men and events. And so men

are taken up into the high places of the earth, shown things that eye hath not seen; told things that ear hath not heard; taken up men and then let down angels of power and deliverance; moulders of men, shapers of events, generals of history. The first thing it does is to endow these intermediaries with an unquenchable assurance. We do not know a thing till we see it. Demonstration such as logic affords will answer for commonplace things but they do not answer at all for things that prick into the necessities of the soul and that lie tangent with the human spirit's terrors and yearnings.

Those are the men that get power to help save the world,—the men who are established in their confidence by the eloquence of great disclosures. When Peter, James and John came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, the difficulties of faith, the problems of skepticism, could no more have clouded the sweet white face of their assurance than a smoking torch could blacken the face of the sun, or wreath in folds of sooty ambiguity the brilliancy of the constellations. There is only one antidote to skepticism, and that is experience. Everything else is merely judgment held in suspense. When a man says with a voice that is half way between a cheer and a whine, "I hope there is a God," "I hope there is such a thing as immortality," "I hope that Christ spoke with divine authority," he does not know anything, he only guesses. He is like the Italian railroad-builder who keeps his back bent to the gravel, never sees the sun and would never know it was noon if

the whistle didn't blow. That is the kind of life that most people in the material city of New York are living to-day; there is no sky in their experience. There is no sun in their astronomy and there are no stars in their nights, and no voice but such as they hear physically or by the aid of a metallic ear-trumpet.

Unless we are prepared to sacrifice the profoundest significance of both the Old and the New Testament Scriptures, we have to concede that while in all the history so recorded there may have been only one transfiguration scene, the instances run up into the high figures of celestial disclosures wherein in one form or another men have consciously walked upon ground that was made bright by a heavenly illumination, and have consciously experienced the impulse conveyed to them by the entrance into them of suggestions borne in from divine sources. And it is that that has constituted the certainty of their purpose and the stability of their assurance. We are taught that we walk by faith. Yes, but not by faith alone. In no range of our life's experience do we ever take anything absolutely on trust. Faith is a producing factor only according to the amount of knowledge that underlies it. It is stupid to believe except so far as we have grounds for our belief. It is in the construction of life as it is in the rearing of a building which we may project into the air to an almost unlimited height provided we have at the bottom something which has not the tenuity of atmosphere but the solidity of rock.

And so Christ says,—"We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen," and by that token, and only by that token, was He able to maintain a career in which there was no anxiety, no misgiving, no fluctuations of feeling or thought.

Moses could maintain himself in steadiness of demeanour and of action in the midst of all the difficulties, antagonisms and embarrassments of his captaincy of the Hebrew people, and he could maintain himself there for forty years because for forty days, —one day for each year,—he had tarried with God in the heights. Stability cannot be extemporized. Stability has got to have something under it to make it stable. Elisha, in the troublous times of King Ahab, environed with peril, loaded with anxiety, could address that vicious and bloody old sovereign with a clarion note of ringing, prophetic denunciation because he could say to Ahab,—"As the Lord God of Israel liveth, *before whom I stand!*" Consciously charged with the secrets of the divine mind and purpose; consciously commissioned to an authoritative vicegerency,—the black earth made beautiful because lying under a white sky.

So of John the Baptist. So of this same Peter, unstable by nature but wrought into adamantine ruggedness by what had dropped into his soul from above, his eyes still bright with the light that years before had glorified the holy mount, and, as he tells us in this chapter, with the divine voice still sounding in his ears, the voice that he had himself heard, and whose infinite persuasion was with him irrefuta-

ble argument clear out to the day of his martyrdom.

Only in that is the explanation of the colossal experience both of joy and of torture that was suffered by the apostle Paul. He tells us in the book of the Acts that he had seen a great light on the way to Damascus. He tells us in his letter to the Galatians that it was by personal revelation from God that was conveyed to him the truth he was commissioned to publish to the Gentile world. He tells us in his second letter to the Corinthians, of the unspeakable words, possible to be heard, but impossible for him to utter that had reached him in a moment of high access to God and the heavenly world.

Now all of that is one of the great secrets of personal Christian stamina. Any soul in order to be held, must be divinely communicated with, and communicated with by dispensations, which if not of the same definiteness, must at any rate be of the same quality, as those Scripturally represented to have been made to such as stood fast in sweet stubbornness in the times of prophets and apostles.

And not only that; but it is such ones, who, according to the measure in which the sky has been uncovered above them, and some sort of an infinite voice has set their ears tingling, and some revelation of unspeakable reality has been made to them;—it is such ones, I say, that are the only true makers of history, and who only lay down the lines upon which events are marshalled towards the grand consummation. You and I have got to get off of the ground

if we are going to do anything. All the noise that is being made, the confusion that prevails, the hustling which is the dominant feature of our day, that is not history; that is merely the squeak of the chariot: it isn't the chariot. The situation reminds me of an automobile that is a frequent nuisance in my street, which stands at a neighbour's door waiting for his occupancy. It does not go; it is not getting anywhere; it simply stands and rattles and smells.

That then is for us one of the great meanings of the transfiguration scene. Heaven and earth close together. Things visible to every eye that has light in it. The heavens not made of brass and God not a dummy. God's touch man's qualification for historic generalship. The world managed by its prophets. Every man so far forth a prophet as he is able to get above the range of dust, soft-coal smoke and everything else that is fuliginous and to rise into atmosphere that is pure enough for God to breathe and into æther that is so white and still that spiritual presence becomes manifest, and the still small voice loud enough to be heard.

That is the crying need of our times, and there is not one of us but that can help to meet that need. But we cannot do it by bluster nor by hustle, nor by the reiterated doing of things in a meaningless way. The acts that count, that make for mankind in its present and its future, are those acts that express some underlying and abiding reality, for that is the track that history runs on. The words that count,

are only those words that say something to the world, that uncover a bit of the great secret, and that help to make the motions of God's mind felt in man's mind.

V

SAVED IF WE ARE FIT TO BE SAVED

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."—*Ephesians 4: 17–18.*

A FEW days since, just after the recent snow-storm, I passed in the street a little fellow drawing a sled, a little rosy-cheeked boy who was so full of perfect happiness that his entire face was crinkled into a smile. He made a beautiful picture. That sled was his only responsibility, and that, along with the snow, made out for him a perfect heaven. I watched the lad and wished I were a boy again. It was a foolish wish, and yet not altogether foolish. There was something exquisite in the situation which one would have been not only foolish but stupid not to appreciate. He had no burden. His sled was unloaded, and slipped along over the frosty pavement almost of its own momentum. He had no anxieties. The little fellow's heart is sometimes bruised, I suppose, but child-bruises do not last as long as older bruises.

But I had not gone many steps past him before I revised my wish, and thought only how beautiful it would be to have the innocence of the boy and his

simple trust, and along with that the mature equipment opening out into the vast opportunities that form the heritage of years that are ripe. Of course the matured sensibilities incident to adult years make us capable of more exquisite sorrow as well as of more exquisite joy. The harp-strings that are so delicately adjusted and attuned as to render the notes of an anthem of triumph, can express equally well the pathos of a requiem. Capacity for delight means necessarily capacity for its obverse. Still it would be very tiresome to remain permanently a child dragging an empty sled along the frosty pavement, and while child-living is certain to be sweet living it cannot be great living. It makes a charming picture, but studied too long ceases to be a commanding reality. The experience of this little fellow, made beatific by the simple circumstance of a snowfall and a coaster, was a case of a little cup that required only a little to fill it. Satisfaction whether of the child or of the grown-up is always matter of a full cup, permanently keeping the contents up to the brim of the containing chalice.

And does it not occur to you that it is in just that fact that we discover the reason for so much of life's unsatisfiedness? The boy's happiness was of a very small kind, to be sure, but he was a very small boy. He was no larger than the means,—sled and snowdrift,—that were offered for his enjoyment. As he grows larger in physical proportions not only, but also in the inner dimensions of his life, something beside frost and steel runners will be necessary to com-

pose his heaven, and he will drag his sled home and hang it up. We all of us have some kind of sled packed away in the cellar or hung up in the attic. We look at our old playthings sometimes and with just a tinge of sadness, but we do not care to play with them. A man well along in the years was once overhead to say,—"When I was a lad I wished I could have a cent to buy a stick of candy. I have the cent now, but I don't want the candy."

So far as matter of satisfaction, then, is concerned, the problem is, as fast as the chalice enlarges to continue adding to the contents so that the chalice may always be kept brimming. Our dissatisfaction will be accurately measured by the distance between the top of the contents and the top of the cup. And, judging from appearances, that distance is, in quite a prevalent number of cases, somewhat considerable. That accounts in part, though not altogether, for the tremendous increase in suicides. It is computed that self-destruction has never been so common as now, since the time of the Cæsars. Then there are a great many people who, if they do not kill themselves, kill time, which is very much of the same nature. Wishing time away is essentially suicidal; it is a kind of cutting one's throat, only lacking the courage to draw the knife. They have hung up their sled. A snow-storm is not amusing any more. The cup has grown big and so has the emptiness in it; supply has not kept up with increasing vacuum, and there is scarcely anything that aches more severely than an aching void.

Add to that the fact that so much of what is emptied into the cup in order to fill it does not fill it. If humanness were naturally a mean shrivelled thing and always remained such, why then only a few drops, and soiled drops at that, would suffice to crown the glass to a beautiful overflowing. But very much to our discomfort we are not made in exactly that way. We are not so constructed as to be able, like the dog, to sleep in supreme satisfaction over a gnawed bone. And the sort of material with which people are some of them trying to fill their cup only suffices to show how desperately full of irrepressible ache the vacuum in their life, without, perhaps, their realizing that it is vacuum at all.

Simply for the sake of an illustration, which is rather an extreme one, let me say that when I was in Paris last summer I read in a Paris paper an interesting account of a reception that some of our distinguished friends passing the season in Newport gave to a chimpanzee. Of course it was mortifying to an American to have it known by Europeans that my compatriots were prepared to confess in that practical way to their belief in the evolution theory and to have it understood in the cultivated centers of English and Continental life that over here people of advertised refinement could drop into such close relations of social reciprocity without either the Newport gentlemen and ladies or the chimpanzee feeling themselves insulted by the contact.

But that first feeling, which of course was one of loathing,—not for the chimpanzee but for his com-

panions,—soon gave place to one which I am sure was more just and wholesome, this, namely, a pathetic realization of the horrid sense of emptiness which people must be suffering under to be willing to fill up the vacuum with material of such abominably unhuman type, like a man so agonizingly hungry that he had rather fill himself with carrion than go to bed supperless, and not only that, but reduced to such an extreme point of inanition as even to acquire an appetite for carrion. It is pitiful. We are so sorry for such people that we forget after a little to be disgusted with them. I have just been reading a volume by a former rector in this city, entitled "The Evolution of Immortality," in which the author maintains the doctrine that only those people will be immortal that have in them anything that is worth keeping.

The incident just referred to would be out of place were it not that intimations are continually reaching the public ear,—leaking out into notoriety,—of expedients less grotesque, but perhaps more repulsive, that are being resorted to by people superficially respectable, in order to maintain the animation of a blasé existence. And all such examples have for us their prime value in this, that they suggest the necessity there is, in order to a satisfied life, that the unfilled soul should in the first place realize its emptiness and that then it should adopt human and rational methods for the increase of the interior supplies. It is of great advantage to us that we be intelligently dissatisfied, and that while we may con-

tinue to try to amuse ourselves by trundling our little sled along the snow, it really does not amuse us any longer. The most discouraging feature in the condition of those Newport people was that they did not realize that they were dissatisfied. They had not really discovered that they had ceased to be babies. Independent circulation had not been definitely started in them since they had passed the crisis of birth.

One of the finest and most far-reaching results accomplished by our Lord was in persuading the world to be discontented, helping it to realize the discrepancy there was between the nature and size of its cup and the amount and quality of its contents. A young man came to Him one day and said to Him,—"What must I do to be saved?" Some influence or other, some word that had reached him from Christ, perhaps, had set him suspecting that he had not yet overtaken himself, that there were chambers in his soul that were still to rent, so that when he spoke down into the depths of his being the kind of echo that came back showed there was a good deal of unoccupied room down there.

The first thing Christ did for the Samaritan woman was to make her discontented. Up to that time she had gotten along to her own satisfaction by simply coming to draw water from Jacob's well. He helped her to feel,—what she may not at all have suspected before,—that there was in her a thirst that only some other kind of replenishment would be sufficient to satisfy. An unconscious, or half conscious, sense of

dissatisfaction there may have been. Probably there was in those Newport people. Probably there is on the part of such young men of our own city, men of ample possibilities very likely, who embellish their convivial entertainments with attractions graded only to the lowest impulses of their natures, or on the part of those elegant women along our avenues who try to nourish their souls on pictured pasteboard and to nourish their purses by shuffling pictured pasteboard. These people have souls, but have not awakened to a consciousness of what such a possession imports. They are not alive enough to be consciously dissatisfied. They are grown-up men, but are so far behind their years that they have not yet dragged their sled home and hung it up in the attic. They are grown-up women but do not know it, and so keep on trying to amuse themselves by dressing and undressing their rag babies.

To such people of course life means very little. They want to live; so do all animals. To want to live is an animal instinct. It goes with the blood, be it the blood of a dog or of a man or woman of whatever kind. They probably want to be immortal, if a thought so large as that can find place for itself in the limited quarters offered for its occupancy, although if dragging through from morning till night costs insufferable ennui the prospect of living for ever and ever can hardly be enlivening, for even cards and lap-dogs would become tiresome after a few thousand years.

The question as to whether life is worth living is

one that cannot be answered by a yes or a no, for some life is worth living and some is not. It depends entirely upon whether a man's life is proportioned to his own native endowments and to the dimensions of the sphere in which his life is appointed to be lived. In neither of those two respects was there any worth in the life referred to a moment ago, for it was out of relation with the powers with which those people were naturally gifted, and just as much out of relation with the world of superb opportunity with which their native gifts are correlated. The life that a dog lives is worth living; that is, it is worth the dog's living, because the dog's life is always true to its inherent nature, and fits perfectly the narrow field of canine opportunity.

Therein lies the necessity of what was urged here a week ago, that we should take a large and sensitive view of our own natures. We spent half an hour trying to gain a more accurate measurement of our souls and trying to realize how wonderful a thing the soul is, how marvellous the events that transpire there, how directly its windows open out upon infinite prospects, how level in its truest moments it feels itself to be with realities that are imperishable and divine, and with what a complexion and vesture of fineness and grandeur everything is seen to be overspread when once we have entered deeply within the soul's solemn precincts.

Even our ability to sin is a tribute to the splendour of our original make, and the further we are capable of dropping into the abysm of depravity, correspond-

ingly exalted must be our original altitude to render so long a drop possible. We can form no just estimate of the horribleness of sin by looking only at the sin. It is only because we are so nearly like God by nature that it is dreadful to become so much like the devil by our unnature;—just as discordant music can become so tormenting because sweet music can be so enrapturing. So that the possibility of sinning becomes a compliment to humanity, not a reproach to it.

It would be well if we would study somewhat more carefully our own experience and try to discover what it means. It seems to me less and less that it is of any particular advantage to harp upon the defects of my own nature or of any one else's nature. There is the best in me and the worst in me, and the worst is pretty bad, but the best can out-vote it if I will live with the best, and by living with the best I mean keeping close to my nature as God made it, and becoming intimate with the tendencies involved in that nature, and becoming at home with the wide region of influence in which those tendencies are fitted to mature and fructify.

We should cultivate a sense of our natural relationship with everything that is finest in the world, and let those strings in our nature that remain musical and sweet be touched by any finger that is qualified to *elicit* the music. If we permit the eloquent voices of the world to speak to us we learn to find how much there is in us that responds to those voices. And we are sensible of the hum of those voices even though not attentive enough to them to make out all

that they would say to us. It is something as when you place your ear close up to a sea-shell; you hear its murmur but do not know what it is telling.

And there is so much that appeals to us if only we will keep the surface sensibilities of our being quiet enough to allow the more delicate and quieter voices to find their way down into the truer and more earnest places of our understandings and hearts. The machinery of response is all there. It was there in those Newport people. But there is no tremor in the strings till they have been touched. If the sea does not throw up in beautiful reflection the hills and foliage that are along its shore it is not because they are not mirrored there, it is not because there are not there still, reflective depths, but because the tremulousness of its furrowed surface has shattered the reflection and made it indiscernible and unintelligible, but those quiet depths are only waiting for the opportunity.

That is the only reason why the beauty that is in the world does not stir in us our sense of beauty and make us beautiful; why the grandeur of God's created universe does not move in us mightily and broaden our thoughts to something of the scope of the universe; why the mystery of things does not quicken us into impassioned inquiry and send our thoughts ranging fascinatedly along the aisles of the unknown; why the truths which have been detected by human research in the things of nature and of mind, of men and of God, of life and of history, do not address us with the power of strong persuasion

and high uplift; why the rich contents of an ennobling literature are discarded in favour of the printed frivolities of a cheap and demoralizing press; why the beauty of exalted lives does not create in us a resurrection into experience of similar ennoblement; and why the divine Spirit that always broods in the deep places of the human soul does not awaken us into a life that is spiritual in its appreciations, sweet in its impulses, firm in its faiths and joyous in its long anticipation.

Now, my friends, were that the whole of the matter it would not signify so much; but if we throw away our life here have we sufficient reason for thinking that God will give it back again hereafter? Human existence, with all the splendid powers of thought, feeling, life and service, and entrance into the dominion of infinite and eternal beauty, truth and uprighteousness, with which we are all of us gifted, is a superb thing as God intended it; but if we disappoint Him by eighty years of small living, narrow thinking, paltry ambition and general indifference to those powers and affections that differentiate us from the lower order of existence, have we ground to suppose that He will think it worth while to go on with us any longer after we have finished our fourscore?

We may not speak dogmatically upon the matter, but you know as well as I that there are a good many things, not only in nature but also in Scripture, that suggest that immortality is not to be assumed by every one as a foregone conclusion. If a man falls so far short of God's purposes respecting him as to

show that he is really unfit to live till he is eighty, there is no presumption in favour of the idea that he will be fit to live for ever and ever. Christ tells us in His parable that the tares were allowed to grow until harvest but that then they were rooted up and burned. It is quite probable that the doctrine of the survival of the fittest has a theological as well as a scientific meaning.

Perhaps if at the conclusion of my stay here it appears that my life has not been worth living and that my soul has fallen so far short of what God intends a soul to be that it does not deserve really to be called a soul, perhaps even then I shall be kept a-going on into times eternal for illustrative purposes, but it seems to me that in that case it would be better for the universe, and kinder to me, quite as much in keeping with what science tells us of things here and with frequent attitudes of Scripture towards things there, that the play, so far as I am concerned, should stop with the first act, and that the grave should be my eternal home.

I want to live, though, and by the grace of God and some effort to be what He would have me I hope to, and I expect to, but you and I have got to work out our salvation and not leave it to the toss-up of a gratuity. The simple question that it seems prudent to ask is this,—Is the life that I am now living such in its spirit as would appear to warrant its indefinite prolongation? Is my soul, as it exists to-day, possessed of value enough to justify God in holding it over into the life eternal?

VI

SALVATION A PREROGATIVE OR A PRIVILEGE?

"Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have *right* to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."—*Revelation 22 : 14.*

THAT to certain ones residence in the celestial city should be granted as a "right" rather than as a privilege or a reward, is, I suspect, a little out of keeping with men's ordinary way of stating the matter or of thinking of the matter. The notion has taken rather a strong hold upon some minds,—minds of a certain class,—that because God is so great, whatever He does is right because *He* does it; that it is right because He does it, instead of that He does it because it is right; that He can be just even though He act in arbitrary disregard of any principles of justice.

Now that is making divine omnipotence an excuse for divine immorality, and at a single stroke excludes everything deserving to be called ethical from the religious domain. If the dollar that you use is worth a hundred cents and the dollar that I use is worth eighty cents you and I cannot talk about dollars any longer. One standard of value is essential for all traffic whether in merchandise or in morals. If

justice on earth is a fixed thing and justice in heaven is an arbitrary thing, then we cannot talk about justice any more, especially on Sunday. It was the doctrine of the severest type of Calvinists that God could be just according to celestial principles and still damn a man that according to terrestrial principles did not deserve to be damned.

And it is a doctrine which, although pleasanter and much more popular, will not bear much closer examination, that God can be just according to celestial principles and save a man who, according to terrestrial principles, does not deserve to be saved. The doctrine of mercy, as mercy is too commonly understood, is simply the doctrine of arbitrary damnation only leaning the other way, and much more in favour with the people; for while no one likes to be treated worse than he deserves every one is willing enough to be treated better than he deserves, and very much of our theology is shaped by the requirements of personal convenience.

It is no thought of ours to under-emphasize the quality of divine mercy, only we must not accord to that or any other quality a monopoly that shall pauperize associate qualities, nor think of God's mercy as an attribute that disposes Him to conceive of me as being other than what I am, or that disposes Him to deal with me on the basis of anything but what I am. His mercy will certainly prompt Him to accomplish whatever can be accomplished towards making me better than I am now, but whether better or worse, His policy towards me will

be determined by what I am actually, not by what I may be hypothetically, nor by what in the infinitude of His loving kindness He would like to have me become.

The temptation is a strong one to attribute to God's policy of dealing with *men* a certain elasticity nowhere discoverable in His administration of things, and to suppose that while in nature His processes are all very straight, He does not feel Himself obliged to hold as strictly to rectilinear methods when His dealings are with things human: so that while in the domain of agriculture you are always confident that you will raise nothing but tares if you sow tares, in the field of personal life and fruitage you cherish a more or less assured expectation of an autumn ingathering of wheat whatever may have been the nature of the seed planted in the spring. It is therefore that merely as a rectifier of prejudiced religious opinions serious study should be given to the methods of action and estimate pursued by God in the natural world, always remembering that the volume of nature is as trustworthy a revelation of the mind and sentiments of God as is the volume of printed Scriptures, and perhaps, in certain respects, even more so, for men had something to do in shaping the Bible, but in the framing and administration of nature God works entirely alone.

One way in which people, occupying Christian ground, help themselves out of difficulty is by their way of understanding such passages in the New Testament Scriptures as speak of Christ's righteous-

ness as being *imputed* to us, interpreting the phrase to mean that Christ's righteousness was so in excess as to afford a surplus available to those whose righteousness was in a condition of deficit. In other words that righteousness is transferable. Now that is a way of understanding matters that never would be tolerated in anything except in religion, and would not be tolerated even there were it not that we are interested parties and willing to enjoy the fruits of righteousness by any device that will obviate the necessity of our being ourselves personally righteous.

Men should be taught to use their intelligence about these things and to use it in the same way as they do in the affairs of every-day life. Religion is a part of the total make-up, not an isolated and exceptional domain erected for purposes of its own and administered by exotic principles. Righteousness is not transferable any more than intelligence is. If you are phenomenally wise and I am phenomenally stupid, I am at any rate not so stupid as to imagine that you can make to me a consignment in bulk of your brilliancy, or that there is any other way of rallying from my stupidity except by the cultivation of intelligence on my own personal ground, in the area of my own mind. You may stimulate me to the working of my brain, but it is my brain not yours that constitutes the organ of my intelligence.

There is also a second method of which people, occupying Christian ground, avail themselves as a means of encouragement when deploring their own unworthiness, and that is that there is some spiritual

trick or other, some scheme of divine legerdemain, by which, when the psychological moment arrives, —at death perhaps,—we can be abruptly reconstructed, the necessity of working out our own salvation be obviated, human holiness be divinely extemporized, and character stand unfolded as a celestial blossom without having gone through the tedious preliminary of being an earthly bud.

Now there again is a point at which thought should save itself from pitiful aberration by consulting the records as they lie wide open before us on every page of nature, and in every process of our own life, physical, mental and moral, down to the present moment. There are no gaps in nature; there are no leaps in life. We reach results by a slow process of *becoming*. There is no change going on anywhere in the world, anywhere in the soul, that does not tell that same story. Everything gained in the department of plant life, human life, mental life, is earned by a laborious process of slow accretion. Character cannot be manufactured, either here or just the other side of the grave. I venture to say that it is not competent even to God to *make* character. He put Adam and Eve into the Garden of Eden without giving them any character and then turned them out among the thorns and the thistles to earn one. It is our own personal reaction upon intellectual stimulus externally applied that can alone issue in our intellectual enlargement, and it is our own personal reaction upon moral stimulus externally applied that can alone effect within us a moral uplift. It

cannot be done *for* us either gradually or abruptly, and to assume that upon our passage into the other life we are to be abruptly transformed by divine fiat from a state of imperfection into one of perfection is to be indifferent to the lesson distinctly taught us by all the processes with which we are made familiar in this present sphere of physical, mental and moral progress.

The situation if thoroughly appreciated will be likely to change somewhat the ideas we shall attach to such words as "rewards" and "punishments" when applied to the issues of the world to come. Our text says,—"shall have *right* to the tree of life"; but what comes by *right* is not a matter of *reward.*

This we might illustrate by reference to the case of a pupil who is being promoted from a school of one grade to a school that is of a grade higher. He is promoted, not for the purpose of rewarding him for the faithful work he has done in the inferior grades, but because the superior grade is the place for him. He has acquired the "*right*" to a place in that grade. That pupils are sometimes promoted before they have acquired the right, and prematurely advanced out of considerations of favouritism is undoubtedly the fact, but advancement on such grounds invalidates the whole scheme of promotion and, in all ordinary relations,—in everything, I mean, except in religion,—is amenable to universal disapproval. Whether in schools or in matters of civil service, individual merit is regarded as the essential condition of candidature; and to set up some other principle of

preferment in matters of the future world, and to assume that there is some other legitimate title to the tree of life beside simple individual *right* to the tree of life, and *right* to a residence in the celestial city, is to break with what we all recognize as justice in affairs of mundane experience, and to let our future condition be decided by a so-called system of divine determination too arbitrary and evasive to be tolerated by any reputable human civil service commission.

If then the pupil is promoted, it is not to reward him for his work; and if he is not promoted it is not for the purpose of punishing him for his lack of work. There is a place where he belongs, and in any well-regulated system of school administration the place where he belongs will be the place in which he will be kept or put. Now that is equity. Any other policy is either favouritism or cruelty. The whole question turns on the pupil's own individual character *as* a pupil. That he wants to go into a higher grade has no bearing upon the question, any more than does the affectionate ambition of his parents and friends. The only inquiry to be answered is what is the grade that fits him and into which he fits.

This opens the way for a good deal that might be appropriately said in regard to punishment,—a matter upon which many thinking people are reviewing their traditional opinion. If a man is put in jail with the idea of making his suffering measure up to the size of his criminal offence, that is one way of viewing the matter. If, on the contrary, he is put in jail

with a view to taking him out of surroundings that are not fitted to him and that he is not fitted to, and placing him where there will be congruity between him and surroundings and kept there till that congruity ceases, and only till that congruity ceases,—indeterminate sentence,—that will be quite a distinct way of viewing that matter, and the way, it seems to me, towards which thoughtful sentiment is tending and is bound more and more to tend.

So considered, imprisonment ceases to be a way that the state takes of working off a grudge against the criminal, and ceases to be a way that the state takes of hurting the criminal as much as the criminal has hurt the state,—a sentiment that is quite as Mosaic as it is Christian; and becomes rather the method authoritatively taken simply to place each man in the niche that measures up, or measures down, to the moral dimensions of the man in question, varying the niche as the man's moral dimensions vary, giving him no freedom till he demonstrates that he has the right to freedom, till his certified moral condition is such that a free and open world is the one only environment that is congruous with that condition.

My only purpose in this reference to earthly penology is to keep our minds trained down to the thought that the treatment to be accorded to a man is to be determined by what the man inherently is, and not by any outside considerations whether of enmity or of affection; that the man's character creates a demand that he be dealt with just according

to the tone of that character; that that is his right; that it is his right that he should have just as much heaven or just as little heaven as will be in accord with that tone; that a good man will go to the place or condition that we call heaven, not because God wants to pay him for having been good, but because he would be out of place anywhere else and would be defrauded of his constitutional rights by being sent anywhere else; and that a bad man will be put in a different place or condition, not because God wants to chastize him for being bad or has any moral antagonism that needs to be satisfied, but because he would be out of place anywhere else and made to respire an atmosphere too sweet and spiritually refined to be tolerable to so low a grade of moral organism.

That men differently conditioned morally are destined to differing experiences in the life to come seems not only natural but necessary, but there is something that grates upon the average sensibility in the idea of a man being either temporarily or eternally subjected to arbitrary infliction merely with a view to the squaring up of an old moral account. There is a feeling that no balance sheet can quite be constructed where items of iniquity in one column will make equal footings with items of anguish in the other column. Whipping a bad boy may help to make him a good boy, but there is nothing in a whip that can offset the boy's iniquitous act and make a virtuous act of it.

This question of reward and punishment has a

long reach. Public sympathy was excited recently by the case of a man arrested and convicted for burglarly. He finally after a term of years escaped from jail, commenced a new life, made himself a valuable and distinguished member of society, useful and beloved; but after ten years or so was recognized as an escaped convict and sent back to jail. The sentiment of the public was that he did not belong in jail, that character, as he had attested it, gave him the right to liberty, and that his reimprisonment was at the impulse of a finicky system of ethical bookkeeping. Every one who has read Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables" lamented the recapture of Jean Valjean; that is the sentiment of the world when you get down to the place where the world keeps its sentiment; and the universal sentiment, when you find out what it is, is sound.

If a man who has been virtuous becomes criminal, the virtuous acts that he has performed in the past do not count in his behalf; so if a man who has been vicious becomes virtuous no more do his past criminal acts count against him. The act has no substantive value in either case. It is what the man is at any given moment that determines his entire status as before God. Hence St. John says,—"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Is just to forgive them; is under holy obligation to forgive them. The man in that case has a "right" to God's favour: God has no right to lay up against a man, become holy, the things the man did before he became holy. Such an idea, as that

God cherishes His own remembrance of a man's sins as something apart from the man himself who committed them, represents the divine character under an aspect that is forbidding, and that is vetoed by the words just quoted from St. John. Much in Scripture that might be interpreted otherwise is certainly a quotation from the necessarily inadequate methods of human tribunals.

There is scarcely a page of Christ's Gospel that does not indicate how little emphasis He laid upon the past criminality and viciousness of people once they had ceased to be criminal and vicious. Read for that the story of the returning prodigal who, once he was back in his father's house, was to his father as though he had never been a prodigal. It is as though the father had said to the boy,—"No matter what he has been; no matter what he did out in the far country; he is not in the far country any longer. He is now my dear boy, clean, honest and loyal, and that is all that concerns either him or me."

I wish that the Church had always been as disposed to cherish in just that way the sweetness of the divine justice as it has been to accentuate its stiffness and acerbity, and to conceive of God as a great deal more disposed to fix His anxious, loving thought upon just the thing that we personally are at this moment, than to keep His recording angels busy filling up books of remembrance with memoranda of either the bad things we do or the good things we do. I do not like to think of my heavenly Father as a divine bookkeeper.

VII

PRESENT LIVING GLORIFIED NOT CHEAPENED BY THE LIFE ETERNAL

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure."—*1 John 3 : 3.*

IT is one of the characteristics of the great men of the Bible, that however large their spiritual attainments, and however intense their experience of eternal and divine things, this intensity of experience never operates to disturb in them the equilibrium of their intelligence. Just as a man who has an extraordinary genius for any line of scientific or artistic production needs an unusual amount of good sense in order to hold that genius under restraint and to keep it to a line of good behaviour, so a man who has entered deeply, as did prophets and apostles, into the profound realities of God, and of God's great invisible world of spirit, needs an uncommon supply of usual every-day intelligence in order to restrain the high-spirited passion of his soul from becoming a mania and in order to keep his earthliness and his unearthliness close enough together to save his godliness from wrecking his humanity.

That, I say, is one of the charms of the spiritual heroes of Scripture. They were sane. They

reached far up into the sky but never took their feet from the ground. They were not godlike at the expense of their humanness: never put their bodies upon the market for the sake of raising funds to capitalize their souls. They wanted in some respects to be *like* the angels, but never tried to *be* angels; they walked with their legs without ever trying to flutter with their wings. Plato used to teach the doctrine that it was a man's duty in such way to spiritualize himself as to crowd the rest of his nature as far as possible out of existence. Paul also explicitly instructs us to keep the body under, not to let it get the upper hand, but further than that he had no quarrel with the body, but on the contrary rejoiced in the expectation of having something of a similar kind to tabernacle his soul in in the world to come.

This was one of the marvels of the life of Christ, that withal His fellowship was so close with the unseen world, He never said anything or did anything that was irrational or silly when viewed from the standpoint of the seen world. The Apocrypha of the New Testament—a book which I think is rather rare now—contains a good many stories, of the Baron Münchhausen type, descriptive of paltry and puerile miracles that Jesus wrought while a small boy at Nazareth,—an exhibit of what you might call "Deity at play," "outputs of divine nonsensity"; but all of that is in form and impulse totally foreign to the contents and animus of the accepted Scriptures which are written upon lines which however far

transcending ordinary intelligence, nowhere insult ordinary intelligence.

The fact thus far stated is illustrated in the passage before us in the Epistle of John. The writer had just been opening the hearts of his readers to the prospect of the world beyond. While not attempting,—and no Bible author does that,—while not attempting to draw for them a definite picture of the eternal life to which they were some time to be admitted, he makes that life sufficiently real to afford support for their aspirations to fasten to, and stirs in their hearts impassioned anticipations of the revealed presence there of their Lord, and of the way in which, in His presence, they will become transformed into His likeness, using for the purpose the familiar words,—" Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall be manifested we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

That opened out before them a prospect upon which it is easy to suppose they would have liked to have Him go on pasturing them. There is nothing more natural than the pleasure we take in stepping out, or in supposing we are stepping out, of a world of matter-of-fact, and coming into the range of things that transcend nature. It is a tendency that suggests the vastness of the human spirit, but a tendency that requires to be treated with economic discretion.

As you will recall, it is related of the disciples Peter, James and John, that on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the glory of the Lord had been re-

vealed to them there, and they had been admitted for a moment to the supernal society of Moses and Elijah, and the scroll of coming events had for a brief instant been unrolled before them, they were so overwhelmed by the fascination of it all, that they proposed to the Lord not to go back to the valley again, to the world of commonplace, but to abide permanently in the heights and to remain in the stated society of these visitants from the heavenly world. Whereupon the celestial light faded from the mountain, the visitants were no more seen, and the poor disciples, infatuated with the mystic glory, were abruptly thrust back by their Lord into the midst of the dull prosaic and the ordinary.

Eyes lose eventually the power of vision if they have *no* light, but are burnt out if they have *too much* light. A life is dismal if it has in it no Mount of Transfiguration, but would be spiritually wrecked by having too much, and while human life is a very cheap thing if it undertakes to maintain itself steadily untouched by the heavenly prospect, the purpose of that prospect is not to destroy our relish for earthly living, but so to brighten the earth where we are at present doing our living that we may see how to live, and have the patience and the courage to live well, even as the sun which shines in the natural heavens is not set there for us to climb up into, but to make the ground bright enough for us to be able to walk on it without falling off.

So when in our chapter John has for an instant opened for his readers the door leading into the

future home of the redeemed, he shuts it to again, almost slams it to, brings them squarely back to earth once more, and says to them as stated in our text, that the matter *immediately* before us is not what we are going to be there, but what we are going to be and do here, and that the only legitimate effect of the glimpse he had just given them into the celestial world would be to steady and encourage the steps that were to be taken by them in this world. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as God is pure." That preserves the continuity between the life there and the life here, but the use to which he *puts* that continuity is to *enhance* our interest in this world rather than to *diminish* that interest, it being understood though that that interest is of a kind such that it will bear transplanting and be admissible at the port of entry of the world eternal.

This leads us on to say that there is an exceedingly harmful way, rather frequently practiced by the pulpit and by Christian teachers generally, of slurring over this world and the things of it, the pursuits of it, the enterprises of it, in a manner to indicate that nothing that happens here or that is done here is of great importance, that it has only a momentary significance, that what meaning it has is only provisional and to be expunged by meanings that will for the first time really begin to be meaningful when the years of time have been replaced by the ages of eternity. That is one of numerous attempts that are made to cause great things to mean very much by forbidding small things to mean anything.

So far as appears there is no reason to suppose that a year of life the other side of the grave will denote any more than a year of life on this side, or that what we do in one of the two will signify more or less than what we do in the other of the two. Things are no larger because existing ten thousand miles away in point of space or ten thousand years away in point of time. If you cut an object off from all connections with the rest of the world, if you separate a grain of sand from its intimate constructive associations with the balance of the universe, then probably it does not mean much. But you have no right to detach what is creatively conjoined. You would not say of the smallest block of marble, most concealedly wrought into the fabric of the temple, that because it was small or because it lay in shadow it was therefore despoiled of significance. It means as much there as though it were the keystone of the arch or the last element added to the crown or the finial.

That is where the work-a-day world and the world of prayers and preaching are constantly coming into collision with each other. It is at that point that people who preach are inclined to look with a kind of holy contempt upon such as strenuously expend their energies upon what is distinctly secular, and it is at that point that those who are immersed in secular pursuits are disposed to treat the presentations and persuasions of the pulpit as too transcendental to be of practical account. Now without any wish to apologize for a man who is irreligiously secular, or to suggest anything in the nature of a compromise be-

tween the secular and the religious tendencies, so far as those tendencies work at cross-purposes, yet it is difficult to withhold one's respect from a man who is tremendously devoted to his daily employment, who consecrates to that employment the energies of body, mind and heart, even though there be little, if any, evidence of that devotement being religiously inspired.

I do not mean that that meets all the demands in the case, but only that there is something admirable in the very act of throwing one's self into one's work for all that one is worth. Such a person has a feeling that there is meaning in such work, that it has substantive value, and he feels it so strongly and with so keen a sense of the import of it all, that he resents anything in the way of pulpit insinuation that goes to imply that all of this is unreal, that it is an engrossment with the mere husks of existence, bodiless shadow that will utterly disappear with the incoming of a wider light, a dense mist that will vanish into thin air with the full rising of the sun.

I cannot believe that we would have implanted in us by our divine Maker all that passion for doing things that we are most of us possessed of, if the things when done meant nothing, and were so much rubbish which the inundation of the great times to come would sweep away into the wide waste of oblivion. As remarked before these impulses that we all have must count for something in the divine regard or we should not have them. Men are not such utter fools as homiletical discourse would sometimes make

them out to be; if they were it would be the severest kind of reflection upon the Being who made them.

You have seen men, very ordinary kind of men too, getting out stone to be used as material in the walls of some building that is being put up. Getting out stone just for the sake of getting out stone would hardly be a significant or a rational performance; but they are not getting out stone just for the sake of getting out stone. They may not be distinctly conscious of all that it means, any more than the honey-bee in framing the comb appreciates the value and genius of its work, but it is the value of the work and not the workman's consciousness of it that we are thinking of just now.

Much of the same holds true, only a little more distinctly true, of the artisan who hammers the stone into shape after it has been delivered from the quarry and brought to the building site. The care he takes in giving to the block specified dimensions and the conscientiousness with which he hews the block to a previously determined angle, all of that would queerly interest you if you had never seen anything of the kind before, would lead you to think that that stone when finished either meant nothing or meant a great deal, probably the latter, and that the man who had spent so much cunning effort was either very crazy or very sane, probably the latter, and that even if he did not know exactly what the block was good for when it was done, he had at any rate made a good job of it, and had turned out something that was good for something, and might be good for a great deal.

In the next stage of the proceedings, however, things begin to explain themselves, and if you stay by long enough to see the block hoisted into position in the wall the entire story discloses itself to you. You know now that the rude stones taken from the quarry were not crude chunks of foolishness, and that the polished and bevelled stone wrought by the stone-cutter was not simply an elaborate and elegant chunk of foolishness, which was artistically carved only to be pulverized and scattered to the wind, but that it was a piece of glorious intention fabricated into stone, deriving its value, and that a permanent value, by contributing to the completeness of the building, the law of whose structure had determined its removal from the quarry, had determined every blow struck upon it by the stone-cutter, and had determined the precise position it should occupy, whether more conspicuous or less so, in the prospective edifice.

With the survey of the situation thus gained you would realize that there was reason in the earnest way in which the stone-cutter went above carving the block, and that when he had finished it, it was a valuable result he had accomplished,—a result that was valuable not with a passing value but with a long value, and that the thorough devotedness of labour and skill with which he committed himself to his task was no foolish hallucination, no idle imagination that he was doing a good thing, but a good thing that time and a little enlargement of his view of things would show him to have been a very stupid thing and significant only with a significance that could not last.

And it is a certain sense of being about something that has more than momentary meaning that preserves his self-respect while so engaged. If one were to ask him, while chipping off a bit of stone here, and another bit there, why he puts so much of care and seriousness into his strokes, he would say that a good deal of importance attached to the product he was turning out. He would insist upon the long reasonableness that there was in his industry. He might not have had in his mind a constant and distinct picture of the edifice that the block was eventually to be mortised into, but at the same time a half presentiment of it would play in and out between the strokes which he delivered and there would be through it all an undertone of feeling that he was working not only for his pay, but contributing to an architectural result that would be a great and glorious fact in the world long after his tools had been laid away and his hand had forgotten its cunning.

All of that, it need hardly be said, is easily translatable into terms of the larger situation in which we find ourselves placed as men and women with a long, long future. We, too, are unable to rid ourselves of the feeling that the work to which we are applying ourselves is a reasonable work ; that there is no foolishness in giving ourselves to it devotedly. There is something in the doctrine that all these things are mere fleeting shadows and done humanly only to be divinely undone, that impresses us as cant : and however much we have of that cant on Sunday it makes not a whit of difference with the amount of hard

painstaking work we do on Monday. Work means something to us because of the indestructible notion we have that the thing the work goes into has an ineffaceable meaning. We may not put it all into definite thought, nor speak it out in words, any more than the stone-carver might have been in a mood to do, but in this as in all matters of practical living we are motived a good deal more than half of the time by notions that we never do think out distinctly and perhaps should find some difficulty in thinking out in that way.

While that is all true you will nevertheless see at once that the more distinctly conscious the stone-cutter is of the relation in which his work stands to the building with a large future of a hundred or a thousand years, the greater will he feel to be the dignity of his work and the finer will be the enthusiasm with which he will dedicate himself to it. The splendour of the pile into which his finished production is to enter as an abiding element will not make him think less of the day in which he is living and of the industry with which he fills up the day, but more, infinitely more. So that to him the magnificence and brilliancy of what is to be fills with a good deal of its own splendour the present moment of thoughtfulness and toil, and what he imperfectly *anticipates* communicates an incomparable zest to what he presently *realizes*. So that in that broader range of reality that concerns us, once we have a warm sense of the way in which to-day leads up to to-morrow, and all the days lead up to the eternal to-

morrow, and the larger our thought of eternity, the less shadowy and unreal, not the more shadowy and unreal, becomes the day we are living and every piece of honest work that we do in that day.

That is what makes life worth living, the appreciation something like that which Jacob had of the ladder which he beheld set up, with its foot upon the ground but its upper rungs disappearing in dim perspective high up in the sky,—the same ladder all the way up. That makes each step we take to be a pace forward in the eternal march, the work we do, whatever it be, if only it be honest work done in reverent pursuance of divine law, one more element added to the structure forever on its way towards completion. For purposes of inspiration there is nothing like feeling that we are putting our small efforts into the widening line that pierces the years and goes on lengthening itself into eternities. Not only in the pulpit, or in the meeting of prayer, or in works that are technically humanitarian, but in your office, in your bank, in your profession, what is there for its steadying and stimulating effect upon us to be compared with the feeling that however far away may be the finial that crowns the spire, we are toiling at the structural line that terminates in the finial, and that an act the most material, if righteously performed, contains in it, nevertheless, a residuum of spiritual intention that is gathered into the growing result?

How that must tell in the way of fine exhilaration upon the mind of the student whose heart otherwise fails him as he contemplates the wide and ever-

widening range of truth to be known, and measures against it the paltry acquisitions possible to be made in the limited term of human life. There is nothing more disappointing and depressing than to grow in knowledge a little and to see the great horizon of truth forever widening, unless along with the extending prospect there is the inward assurance that the small lessons we are learning now, lessons of man or God, lessons of the crystals or the stars, are alphabetic signs that will hold over into more distant times and help us there to spell out the richer paragraphs of thought and discovery.

Then too in the matter of our powers of service and of usefulness made from year to year more and more effective with the strengthening of our faculties and with an increase of interest in, and love for, the great world and all its momentous and pathetic concerns, unspeakably sustaining and stimulating becomes all this experience of personal enlargement—which it is the privilege of every live soul to have—if present increase of such power links itself in our thoughts with successive chapters of increase to be carried on in the years unknown and to be applied in whatever larger regions of service may there be opened to us; so that whatever we gain is kept, beginnings all garnered up in the endings, one grand highway always broadening and mounting.

So likewise in every increment of gain we make in the culture of the heart, in the sweetening of its affections, in the strengthening of its righteous principles of life and action, in its slow transformation into the

likeness of the ideal made actual in our divine Master, all of this is so much spiritual capital eternally indestructible, valid for both worlds.

This, all of it, makes living to be great living; this gathers all of the years, present and to come, under the cover of one administration and connects with a vital tie the moment that we call "now" with the moments that lie far out beyond the horizon of the years that we look upon and count, something as the atom you hold on your finger is united by cosmic ties with the stars that flash in the unfathomed depths of infinite space.

Such attitude then, assumed in the presence of God and of the ages, not weans us from life but wins us to it; not rubs out the meaning of the small efforts we are making, the small things we are doing, the small lessons we are learning, but fills them with fresh intensity of meaning; not makes ignominious and perishable the matters to which with an irresistible instinct we cling, but paints them with a beauty that is unfading, hallows them with a sanctity borne down upon them from the great overarching eternities filled with the presence of God.

VIII

POWER IN REPOSE

"Study to be quiet."—*1 Thessalonians 4 : 11.*

QUIETNESS of mind is not one of those qualities of character most likely to impress us by its assertiveness. It would generally be classed among the negative properties of a man's spirit, and thought of as being, if not exactly effeminate, at any rate as distinctly lacking in virility.

Especially is this the case in times like the present when one's ears are being mercilessly hammered by that word that has become to some of us almost repulsive, not to say exasperating,—I mean the word "strenuous,"—the holding taut of every possibility of power, the continuous knotting of the muscles of the body and of the mind in readiness to precipitate themselves into some one of the Twelve Labours of Hercules or even into some thirteenth labour too "strenuous" for the reputed son of Zeus even to have ventured to think upon or execute,—the current disposition to measure values by the standard of the overwhelming and detonating tremendousness of the results which they purchase;—when we have operating so many men, not only of low but especially of high degree, who have a peculiar gift, granted

from heaven or elsewhere, for keeping everything in an uproar, so that if one desires to invest himself with a restful environment it becomes necessary for him to close his eyes, his ears and even his thoughts, to all sublunary things and to go out into the night, and contemplate the voiceless drifting of the stars, "forever unhasting and unresting."

That being so distinctly the feature of our decade, anything that is attended with so few flamboyant accompaniments, as the grace commended in our text, is certain to be estimated by the unthinking commonalty at a very low figure. We have just called it a "grace." We distinguish between gifts and graces. That may be a convenient distinction to make but conveniences are very apt to be mischievous. While we think of a gift as a power with which a man is endowed, we unfortunately think of a grace only as an ornament with which he is decorated,—a sort of picture with which his soul is hung, a fresco with which the walls of his spirit are beautified, a spiritual tint that allures and fascinates the spiritual vision of the beholder, something that is interiorly pretty, not something that carries with it the idea of strength in repose.

What we call the negative virtues, such as meekness, submissiveness and this quality of quietness, are, I am sure, quite utterly misapprehended. They are not negative at all. There is nothing a-going that is more absolutely positive, nothing that involves more of the element of power, but power in repose. Power is not so difficult if you can *use* it;

the strain comes and the real grandeur commences when that power is bidden to lie down and be quiet. What we might call the consummating genius of human character consists not in doing but in simply standing. The finishing quality of such character lies not in what he says but in what he does not say but would like to say and could say well if he said it: not in what he does but in what he does not do but would like to do and could do well if he did it. The eloquence of oratory lies along the line of words; the eloquence of character lies along the line of silence.

You have certainly realized it to be true that there was nothing in Christ's life that so attested the magnificence of His might as in what He refrained from doing, as when He said at His crucifixion,—"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels,"—where the grandeur of the moment lay not in what He did but in what He had the power *not* to do; able to act and get His angels, but charged with the supereminent ability *not* to act and to let the angels go. Power, then, that could fill all of Calvary, Jerusalem and Judea with squadrons of the heavenly host, but power in abeyance, power not used, power in repose.

Or when again at His crucifixion He yielded up His body unresistingly to the blows which world-paganism dealt upon the incarnation of infinite holiness, stood motionless when He might have moved the world, hung still when He might have made the

heavens and the earth reverberate in damning protest; conquered by not trying to conquer; did everything by not laying Himself out to do anything.

A man who is quite widely distinguished for his physical vertebracy and moral urgency was addressing a while ago an assembly of mothers, and expatiating upon the proper method of bringing up boys. Among other racy doctrines that he projected into their maternal ears was that of their duty to educate boys to resent any affront put upon them, and to keep the little fellows so physically trained and so internally wound up as to be in condition to thrash into a state of humility whomsoever ventured to trespass upon the territory of their juvenile dignity. I am not quoting the exact words but am quoting the exact idea; and the idea is a definite return to unevangelized savagery, morally vulgar and Christianly hideous. Boys are kept wound up without any winding: they are usually self-winders. It requires very little training and very little power, inward or outward, to qualify a boy to fight. It is *not* fighting that takes the power. A boy who feels himself to have been outrageously wronged by his fellow, and who at the same time feels himself splendidly qualified physically to pulverize his fellow into the original elements of his corporeal constitution, and yet simply stands quietly in the conscious dignity of unused power,—that is what I would call a genuine illustration of power, power that is not used, power in repose.

You have probably noticed the peculiar sort of equipment with which in the passage from the Philippian Letter, read this morning, St. Paul describes the several pieces of armour requiring to be worn by the Christian in his conflict with the soul's inward and outward enemies. You can always determine from the sort of implements that a man uses what kind of work it is that he is preparing to do with them; and you can always determine from the weapons that a soldier carries and from the armour with which he clothes himself what kind of warfare it is that he is intending to wage.

Now in introducing a statement of the several pieces of armour needed, he hints at the peculiar type of heroic power that a Christian should be prepared to illustrate by saying in a general way,— "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand:" not "that ye may be able to advance"; not "that ye may be able to accomplish some tremendously crushing achievement as against the forces hostile to the soul, human or superhuman," but simply "that ye may be able to stand," to hold your own ground; not to conquer, but to succeed in not being conquered; power, but power not expended; power in repose.

And quite in consonance with this general charge "to stand," simply to be yourself where you are, and to be yourself in a manner of quiet sufficiency,— of the six pieces of armour, that he goes on to specify, five of them have nothing to do with bruising, crushing, pulverizing; nothing overt about them; noth-

ing to do with assailing the devil in any of his forms of inward or outward manifestation; but simply that sort of armour,—protective armour,—that helps to keep a man's soul from *being* bruised, morally pulverized;—that enormous endowment of tremendous might that enables a man simply to keep quiet, to have his soul administered under a régime of composure, to be what the surrounding world of nature is in the midst of a still night, no breath stirring, no leaf fluttering, no sparrow chirping, no clashing even in the muffled machinery of the stellar firmament,—the whole thing a noiseless expression of waiting power, might in suspension, power in repose.

There is that which takes a very strong hold upon us when, as in the manner just indicated, we contemplate the quietude, the imperial composure, of the immense material universe that is living its life and with such graceful self-restraint maintaining its course all around us, beneath us and above us, in the solemn depths of our own globe, in the sea and in the air and in the vast astronomic spaces tenanted with blazing worlds of such unutterable manificence; when, I say, we contemplate the terrific energies that are wrought into the very structure of things, energies that once in a while whisper just loudly enough to let us know that they are there, and then relapsing into absolute stillness once more; as in that momentary tremor, shiver, of our earth recorded by the seismograph last Tuesday, or in the volcanic eruptions such as those of Vesuvius, Pelée, Krakatoa,

that simply suggest to us the terrific capabilities, the sort of material omnipotence that is quietly bedded in the very fiber of every created thing, all the way up from a speck of dynamite to the body of our own earth electrically charged, and inwardly throbbing, quite probably, with tides of a molten sea, and on and out from there into the whole range of infinite distance teeming with the massive enginery of systems and constellations, everything suggestive of power, but power that is of such settled might as to be able to exercise itself without perturbation, to evince itself under forms of display that bespeak an inner restfulness, and to tell back upon the soul with the power of a quieting baptism.

Of course we have realized how this gentle omnipotence, this restful power that tells itself out to us in every aspect of nature, finds its spiritual expression in the personality of Jesus; in the unanxious, uncontentious, unruffled way in which He met the adversary of His soul and by the quietness with which He did nothing, proving it to the devil that He could do everything; in the easy way, free from all symptoms of endeavour, upsetting the world, but Himself never upset,—the easy way in which He could do things that were infeasible, and stand in quiet undismay in the face of the impossible; the serene self-sufficiency with which He could take of the things of God and show them to men, move God's throne down into human hearts, and produce disclosures upon which the eyes and hearts of sixty generations have been feeding, with no prospect of

ever coming to the full end of their import; so still Himself that He could still Gennesaret, and quiet interior storms by the side of which the Gennesaret tempest was a mere zephyr.

And it is no sufficient reply to say that Christ's situation was exceptional and that He was made capable of all this vast and untroubled serenity because of His divineness, because of the steadying hold had upon Him by influences supernal, and because of the anchorage of His life into the life of God. For when Isaiah says,—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee,"—he concedes to all of us the same opportunity of support and therefore the same privilege of inner quietude that was enjoyed by Christ Himself. One criticism that requires to be passed upon a good deal of our religion is that we make Christ's relation to God too unlike the relation *we* may sustain to Him.

In other words there is not God enough in our religion. Enough of God as an idea, perhaps, but idea does not count. Idea does not do any work. A child may have a perfect photograph of his mother, but that photograph will not hold the child in its mother's arms, nor soothe the little one's pain, nor comfort the little one's heart, nor quiet its trembling nor banish its nervous fears. We who are older, also, love the pictures of those who are dear to us, yet even *their* prime value is not in themselves but in the way they help us to experience the loved and loving reality of the dear person they represent. Present or absent the support they render us is not a

matter of picture or of idea but of pressure upon us of their own personal spirit.

We need to emphasize that thought, I am sure, more than it is our habit to do. We were mentioning here two Sundays ago the positive impress that one human spirit exerts upon another, the positive results that one loving soul brings about in another soul. It is the *transference* of that *thought* into the relation existing between God and His human child, the *experience* of that *fact* in the relation existing between God and His human child, that makes out the biggest and most genuine reality of the Christian religion;—a sense of God's tender touch upon us; a sweet experience of the uplift of the everlasting arms. Christianity is intended to be to us a practical and a blessed utility, an antidote to some at least of the heart-sicknesses to which life renders us liable; and especially, this morning, solid ground upon which we can stand that will hold us out of reach of the tremor that is in the air, the quakings that are in the ground and the restlessness natural to a responsive heart, living in the midst of a tremulous world.

The tremor that pervades the world of thought and action to-day is too evident a fact to need demonstration. It is matter of constant comment among us. There is quiver in the air, there is jar in the thoughts of men, there is clashing in their activities, and all the outside tremulousness tends to reproduce itself in the mind of each of us. It gets into our souls and the big storm outside is all the

time creating little tempests in here and piling up young billows that dash against the inner shore and throw up sprays into the inner atmosphere.

Now it is large part of the beauty of living, of the consummate perfection of human experience, to be in a tempest and yet not to be tempest-tossed,—like Christ on that day when, with the whole sea of Galilee stirred up into fury He slept and dreamed, perhaps, " in the hinder part of the ship." That indeed is a thrilling picture of ideal experience,—divine slumber untouched by a terrestrial hurricane. We cannot get away from these things. Every noise in the street gets on your nerve. You may not be conscious of it, but it uses up just so much of your personal tissue, and taxes just so much of your mental fiber.

And we have no right to run away from it. To hide away in a monastery or a convent or to seek any other kind of retreat from the world is rank cowardice. The world was made for man and man was made for the world with the intent that he should stand in the thick of it and in the turmoil of it and the shiver and rattle of it, but not that he should be shivered or rattled: which he is bound to be except as the God-wrought solidity in his soul is so morally compact that it can stand unshaken and undisintegrated by the beating upon it by the waves of external storm; except, that is to say, as he is divinely capitalized by that same wealth of God's almighty serenity that enabled Jesus to dream in the midst of the gale that swept Gennesaret. Only he that the storm can-

not touch can touch the storm, and Jesus could quiet the sea because He was not disquieted by it. If we are going to do any work we shall have to work out from still centers. Architects do not put up buildings when there is an earthquake in progress. They may strive to make them strong enough to resist the strain of an earthquake, but they do not do it while the earthquake is already on. Ships are built for the sea and designed to be constructed with a solidity that shall make them a match for all the stress of the sea, but ships are not built *at* sea. This is a lesson whose seriousness extends in every direction. If one will mount a telescope in a way to penetrate with confident accuracy into the secrets of the heavens, the first step towards such a result is to carry the foundations of the observatory so far down into the depths of the earth as to secure it against the vitiating effect of surface tremors. Deep secrets can only be visible to a still eye.

In that illustration, now, of the deep secret and the still eye, there is a reference to things that must for a moment engage our thought before closing. With all the interest which the human mind takes in the events of life, in the changefulness of its scenes, in the variegated and often conflicting aspects under which, what we call the reality of things, manifests itself, we are overwhelmed oftentimes with the desire to have a warm, living and confident experience of somewhat that lies far deeper than fluctuating appearances.

And then, too, in the midst of all life's coming and

going, in the midst of the things that rise, but that set again, that bloom, but that decay again, that are here now but that to-morrow, perhaps, will vanish into the realm of the invisible and of the unknown, amid all this we crave,—and sometimes with a very passionate longing,—we crave the privilege of feeling with increased distinctness the presence about us and the support underneath us of somewhat that is real, a realm not separate from our common every-day world, but a realm that is the pervasive life of this world, and that stays even though the grass withereth and the flower fadeth, a realm that is impregnated with the very spirit of permanency and saturated with the quintessence of the eternal, a vast underlying foundation of the reliable and the immutable; something that we can rest upon.

That is what rest means. It does not mean inaction. There is no rest like the rest of a mind that is tremendously alive, and of a heart that beats with a gigantic pulse, only that mind in its activity, and that heart in its intensity, must feel themselves buttressed in supports to which they can commit themselves in the unreserve of a perfect trust; which must be to the soul what the diamond points are to a watch, upon which the spirit's delicate machinery can play in sweet assurance and tick out the moments and roll off the hours of an experience that is maintained in serenity and confidence.

We may not be able in many instances to follow with perfect accuracy the direction taken by the structural lines of God's spiritual universe, but some

of those lines we must be able to trace in order to make life endurable. There are some things that we have got to know in order to save life from being a torture. We have got to know and to feel that we have a God whose wisdom makes Him a safe ruler, and whose love makes Him a tender Father. We have got to know and to feel the natural indestructibleness of the human soul that makes it heir to the life eternal. We have got to know and feel that truth is truth forever and ever and that love is love all the way from mother's knee to God's throne.

And those things do not disclose themselves to us amid the rush of event and the tumultuousness of our perturbed life. With us, as with Elijah, they do not reach us through the ministration of the storm, the earthquake or the fire, but as a still small voice made audible to us in the silent quietude of our own waiting, listening spirit. The ruffled surface of our life may be so full of noise and turmoil as to preclude the access to us of definite vision, and as to confuse the tones of those inarticulate voices that seek to tell us of the things which ear hath not heard; but underneath the billows by which the *surface* of the soul may be furrowed, there are, if God's spirit has been a stilling presence there, quiet depths, a still, interior heaven, where the things of God and of the world supernal reflect themselves as the placid waters of the sea throw up into our eye the image of the stars.

I close with the words very touchingly rendered to us by our choir last January :—

"When winds are raging o'er the upper ocean,
And billows wild contend with angry roar,
'Tis said, far down beneath the wild commotion,
That peaceful stillness reigneth evermore.
Far, far beneath, the noise of tempests dieth,
And silver waves chime ever peacefully;
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er it flieth,
Disturbs the Sabbath of that deeper sea.

So to the heart that knows Thy love, O Purest!
There is a temple, sacred evermore;
And all the strife of earth's discordant voices
Dies in hushed stillness at its peaceful door.
Where no rude storm, how fierce soe'er it flieth,
Disturbs the soul that dwells, O Lord, in Thee."

That, then, with which we have to face the future, be it the future of this life or any other future, is ourselves, the thing that we to-day are, the qualities of heart and purpose that compose our present status as we stand this moment, face to face with God,—without anything being added in, imaginatively made over to us by artificial divine conferment, and without anything being taken out, imaginatively subtracted from us by artificial divine elimination.

Whether in going out from to-day into to-morrow, or from this life into some other life, the whole question turns on what we are individually and intrinsically worth. Each day is a kind of judgment day that settles to-morrow. What we are each day creates for us our own place in God's universe and presumably always will. We must not so misunderstand what the Gospel intends by God's grace, as to go along relying upon divine subsidies. Wherever

we go at the end of this life it will be because we send ourselves there; it will be because it is the place we have destined ourselves to and qualified ourselves for, either by the use of the means that God in His mercy and loving kindness has put within our reach, or by the neglect of the means that God in His mercy and loving kindness has put within our reach. If we do not go to the place provided for the faithful children of God, it will be because we have not made those attainments that would make such a place suited to us or we suited to it; and if we do go to the place so provided, it will not be due to God's favouritism, nor to His willingness to promote us to a felicity that we are not qualified for and do not deserve; it will be because it is the place natural for us to go to, the place that is, that in the words of St. John we have acquired a "right" to. So that the question asked here before comes back to us again to-day;—"What am I worth? and what, therefore, have I a *right* to?"

IX

HUMAN POWERS A DIVINE ENDOWMENT

"The Elder unto the well-beloved Gaius whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish that thou mayest prosper in all respects and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."—*3 John 1 : 2.*

THE feature of this passage that arrests attention is the interest, the Christian interest, St. John feels in the entire make-up of his friend Gaius, body and soul, in other words in the complete manhood of Gaius, with all that rich variety and arrangement of possibilities with which he, as well as the rest of us, came into the world endowed, and which it is the purpose of life, and the aim of God's saving and ministering Spirit, to have produced to the utmost point of outflowering.

Our thought, then, this morning, is not limited to any one aspect of our complex human nature, but to that nature in its entirety, to that nature considered as something which in its wholeness, and therefore in each individual part, is a precious thing in God's sight, and so precious that, according to the account given in Genesis, the Creator, if I may so say, seems almost to have congratulated himself on producing so perfect a specimen of divine handiwork. John's words here, and his attitude towards the whole man Gaius, encourage us to cherish not merely a secular

regard, but a regard that is sincerely and profoundly Christian, towards everything in us, every capacity and faculty in us, that combines with the rest to compose us.

The matter offers to us not only an interesting study, but a study that, we may be sure, runs along in the line of God's own thought respecting us. It is always a great deal gained when we succeed in surveying any matter from substantially the same standpoint as that from which the divine mind surveys it. It is only then that we can be said to arrive at the truth of the matter. And as God sees everything, must see everything, in its relations to Himself, we shall have fallen short of the truth unless we, too, see things in their relation to Him, view them religiously, that is to say, appreciate them in their sanctity.

One lesson that had been taught to the Hebrews was that certain places were by nature holy, and other certain places unholy; that certain creatures were by nature clean, and other certain creatures unclean. In the rending of the vail of the temple and in Christ's instruction to the Samaritan woman, that lesson was *un*learned and the complete meaning began to be appreciated of what God said to Moses, "the ground whereon thou standest is holy ground." And in the vision wherein Peter saw an array of what he had been taught to discriminate into beasts clean and beasts unclean, but all of which were in the vision declared by a mysterious voice to be divinely *clean*, the unlearning of the old lesson was repeated in another form, and sanctity began to be appreciated by

the first Hebrew Christians as a quality pervading and seasoning every object and creature that bore the impress of the great creative hand. It changes for us the entire complexion of things when we cease thinking of the universe and the things in it as being half of it God's world and the other half the devil's world, and when we cease drawing a line of demarkation through our own being and sort out the divided elements into the two classes of sacred and profane.

This same thought comes to its expression in the prayer which St. Paul offers in behalf of the Christians at Thessalonica, in his first letter to them, when he says, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," in which, first of all, he contemplates the individual man as a unit, and a unit that is to become holy *in* its unity, holy as an entire thing, all the elements holy in their combination, and not simply one or two of those elements taken out from the rest and holy quite by themselves.

I just remarked that St. Paul, in the quoted passage from Thessalonians, contemplates the *individual* man as a unit. Now that very word "individual," like so many other of our English terms, conveys a long lesson in itself, if only we will take appreciatively the real measure of the word. It is the same as the word "indivisible," and so means really something that cannot be separated into parts; that a man is not man in fact except as he is viewed first of all as an entity that has *not* parts, and what for convenience we call

parts simply various aspects of a whole that properly speaking *has* no parts. I am sure you will excuse this reiteration, but the point involved is one that we must get out distinctly into view as preparation for the use that we want to make of it.

Once realize, then, that man, however various the aspects under which he can be considered, is nevertheless first of all a unit, a unit that *as such* is precious in God's sight, a unit that *as such* is designed to be holy, then we can reason down to the several aspects of that unit, to the various capacities inhering in that unit, and the diverse faculties exercised by that unit, and appreciate each of them as a holy thing because partaking of the pervasive sanctity of the whole, something as each separate leaf involved in the unity of a tree is a live leaf because it shares in the all-pervading life of the tree.

It is gratifying to feel, let me say, that the Christian mind is mellowing a little towards this thought that holiness is not exactly that sensitive thing that requires to be put under a glass case, or shut off in a little room by itself; that there is only one world and that God is the God of it all, that all the things which exist in that world, and all the relations which subsist between them, miss of being adequately understood except as they are consciously viewed as standing in the presence of God, and as winning a holy significance from that presence.

The first feature, naturally, that arrests one's attention when the sanctity of man in all his aspects is being considered, is the body. That particular mat-

ter having been remarked upon here recently can be dismissed in few words. There is a rather prevalent disposition to estimate the body, the physical feature of our manhood, somewhat superciliously, aristocratically, something as those who are in favoured circumstances estimate their poor relations. The first thing to remember is that God is the author of the body; it was comprised in the thought Scripturally represented as having been in His mind when He said, —"Let us make man in our image"; and the detailed story of that creative act makes it plain that the material, equally with the immaterial, features of manhood were divinely contemplated in the creative purpose.

And anything which God thought enough of to create we ought to be reverent enough to respect, and to cherish with emotions of sanctity. And even if we are not prepared to accept the Genesis record as in all respects a verbatim report of everything that transpired on the occasion of man's first production, yet the representations given us, even in the Gospel, of man's physical value and of the sanctity pertaining to him in his bodily character, seem amply sufficient to warrant us, and to require us, to look upon the body as a holy thing, as something, that is to say, which God looks upon in its relations to Himself, and that His mind bends itself towards with an admiring interest and earnest concern. That the Son of God in His appearance upon earth should have taken upon Himself a body that was like ours, is in itself a divine eulogy upon

the human form. That He should have carried such a form with Him through the grave is a supplementary eulogy upon it; which is still further extended by the recorded fact of His having finally withdrawn from the earth while still incarnate.

Now whether we are or are not ready to accept in its literalness every physical statement which the New Testament contains, yet at any rate we shall be obliged to admit that the Gospel uniformly recognizes the sacredness of our nature, and recognizes that sacredness as extending down to so much of us as is material as well as extending up to so much of us as is spirit. All of which, if duly appreciated, will be influential in determining our treatment of the body and in stimulating scrupulous and devout attention to all that makes for the body's well-being. Bodily ailment is the physical side of personal unholiness. Understanding that the body, by ordination of nature, is holy, a diseased body can be described as a kind of physical depravity. The closeness with which, in certain New Testament passages, sin and sickness are conjoined, are a commentary upon this matter too suggestive to allow of its being passed over in indifference.

We can afford to be grateful, then, that a recently developed cult lays the emphasis that it does upon the matter of bodily health, for it is well that we should not only appreciate the advantage of being in robust physical condition, but that we should so adopt the body into the category of the sanctities as to make health a part of our religion.

But while the body has been usually thought of as something that need not be taken much into account on ground distinctly religious, there are other, and perhaps higher, aspects and faculties of our indivisible nature that have been in like manner treated with cold courtesy, excluded from the religious domain, and had the door disdainfully slammed in their face,—faculties which are divine in their authorship and therefore to be dealt with in reverence and with a religious regard for the ends which they are creatively designed to subserve. A thing that is constitutionally holy cannot be secularized without leaving behind it a long trail of damages. Whatever a thing may be, to treat it as other than what it is, is to make a lie of the thing and of ourselves at the same time. Of course you know that profanity does not properly mean swearing: it means treating holy things as though they were common, and divine things as though God had nothing to do with them.

And that is exactly the way in which it is habitual to treat a number of the faculties of our nature, the intellect for example. I never heard it said from the pulpit nor from any other place that there is any sanctity attaching to the intellect, or any religious obligation attaching to the cultivation of the intellect. I believe the general opinion to be that God is just as well satisfied with a man who knows nothing as with one whose mental powers have been disciplined to some degree of power and acumen. There is in the Gospel a parable known as the parable of the

talents, a parable the purpose of which is to teach that God esteems men and women according to the degree in which they develop the possibilities with which they are naturally endowed; and so strong is the hold which that parable has taken upon human thought and human language, that it has given us the term that we apply to people that have made large acquisitions especially along intellectual lines, and yet while we have taken the word "talents" from that parable and characterize as "talented" a person of large intellectual parts, we have not preserved from the parable the idea that God's estimate is proportioned to the amount of talents that we have added to those we were naturally capitalized with, so that with that parable familiarized to us from childhood up we go along thinking that God has the same respect and esteem for us whether we have made the most possible of our minds or have left the gray matter in substantially the same condition where it was when we were born.

Does that mean that we are saved by our intelligence? No, it does not mean that we are saved by our intelligence. It means that God thinks enough of intellectual possibilities to give to us some of that commodity; that what He gives us of it at birth He regards simply as a start for us to improve upon; that intellectual possibility, like other possibilities of our nature, carries with it an obligation, an obligation primarily to Him by whom the possibility was conferred, so that if such possibility is ignored, or treated with indifference, or wrapped in a napkin, as

Scripture phrases it, we not only show disrespect to the gift but treat with contumely Him by whom the endowment was bestowed.

Mind is just as truly an essential feature of our humanity as conscience is. And it is just as truly a God-bestowed, and, therefore, holy feature of our humanity, as conscience is. And we have, therefore, no more right to treat it as we happen to feel like treating it, to discipline it or leave it undisciplined, as fancy may incline us, than we have to deal in the like optional way with the moral capabilities of our being.

The fundamental mistake, or I would say, the fundamental sin, is in doing what Peter did before he had his vision, and sorted things out into clean and unclean, a little of our nature lying inside the kingdom of heaven, and therefore to be dealt with as God would have us deal with it, but most of our nature lying outside the kingdom of heaven and to be treated, therefore, as happens to suit us. It means a great deal to look upon human nature as substantially of divine origin and therefore a holy thing, with a holiness that pervades the whole being from skin to spirit, with the entire thing in all its features inscribed with ordinances of holy obligation, under a régime that pins a sacred duty,—if you are not ready to call it privilege,—to every muscle of the body and to one lobe at least of the brain, and to every convolution of it.

It is a thing to remember in that connection that, as physical science informs us, brain does not make

us, we make brain, and starting with the raw stuff with which we are cerebrally loaded, we by our own action work that stuff over, humanize it in mental faculties, "till the finished product is no more like the original gray matter than a Portland vase is like the unfashioned clay it is formed from."

My only purpose in that reference is to illustrate the fact that there is very much less fatality about these matters than in our listless moments we are liable to suppose; that the principle of being divinely qualified to take the five talents that God gives us and, by trading with them, make ten of them, dominates the entire human situation, brain along with the rest; that those five talents,—more or less as it may be,—are a personal affair between God and ourselves; that having been given to us by God they are sacred, and that having been given to us with a view to adding to them, such addition is a holy duty, and falls as surely and as distinctly within the religious sphere as does the cultivation of the moral affections; so that to the extent in which I have failed to use the opportunities afforded me of strengthening my powers of thought and building myself up in the direction of broad and far-reaching intellectual appreciations, I have faltered at the threshold of sacred duty, dishonoured one of the high possibilities of my being, and thereby sinned against the holy intent of the divine author of that possibility.

To sum it all up in a word,—the meaning of that parable of the talents is that we are not at liberty to treat, as we may happen to feel like treating, any one

of the incipient powers with which we have been divinely gifted; that our intellect, among other such powers, whether by nature weaker or stronger, lies out distinctly on religious ground; that with that thought well in mind, to promote our intellectual growth is similar in the sacredness of its import to the promotion of moral uplift and spiritual enlargement; that the day-school on Monday will, by one who grasps the whole situation in its holy innermost, be contemplated as participating in the same sanctity that hallows the Bible-school on Sunday, and that one who teaches in the day-school, if she or he appreciates the divine reference of all of these things, will regard herself as being in the discharge of an office as priestly in its spirit and purpose as though it were exercised in instructing in the Bible or the cathechism.

This, let it be said again, does not mean that intelligence is salvation. It means that the power to learn and to know is God's gift, and that to treat a gift with any kind of indifference or neglect is to affront the donor, be he human or divine.

The same thing can be said, must be said, of the artistic sense, the sense whereby we arrive at an appreciation of beauty, whether evinced in nature or in art. A man may not win favour with God by the skill he displays as a painter, architect, musician, sculptor, or by the enjoyment he is able to derive from the inspection of artistic products; but the artistic impulse is one of the flowers that God has planted in the garden of the human soul. It is not

only a divine plant, but is planted with a divine intention, the intention of having it humanly cultivated. When God fills up with beginnings it is with the idea of having us take those beginnings and carry them as far as opportunity allows towards a state of completion. If He puts a bud in us it is certainly with some such notion as that we should nourish it into a condition of blossom, so far, at any rate, as circumstances will permit.

Perhaps there are already as many, full as many, artists as are requisite; our only contention is that we should take the inventory of all our innate assets, and examine them carefully enough to discover on them the mark of the divine finger, and thus feel those assets not only in their relation to ourselves and to the world, but primarily in their relation to the divine bestower, and thus have the whole situation brought definitely within a religious scope. The effect that such a view, practically carried out in action, would have upon the world's work along the various lines in which that work is being prosecuted, is enough of a matter to furnish topic for a later pulpit meditation.

Our only controversy to-day is against the common habit of shutting God out of four-fifths of our human constitution; giving Him the attic,—what we might call the moral and spiritual appetences,—and retaining the ground floor and all the intermediate stories as playroom for the delectation of our secularized interests; religious at the top and commonplace from there down to the cellar. The fact to

keep emphatically in mind is that there is no potentiality in us by birth that God did not put there, and that He does not continue to feel that He has the prime ownership in; and that He put nothing there that is not requisite to the eventual production of a complete man, no supernumerary faculties, nothing that has not its part to play, its song to sing, in the perfected harmony of a finished soul,—an anthem holy to the Lord in its entirety only because each note, chord and progression of it is the voicing of a holy impulse and a devout aspiration.

X

HUMAN POWERS A SACRED TRUST

"The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens and His kingdom ruleth over all."—*Psalm 103: 19.*

TO seize upon the truth thus set forth and to make it actual in the midst of the years is the purpose of life and of history. It is that for which we pray whenever we say,—"Thy kingdom come." If in that prayer our thoughts run as high as our words, we know that the thing we petition for is that the mind and heart of God shall be the energy actually dominating us in the shaping of our purposes, the creation of our ambitions and the determination of our activities,—drawing everything under the restraint and constraint of a religious régime.

Human history promises to be a large volume, containing many chapters of which we can have no present presentiment, but we do know something of the particular chapter that is now being composed, and we know that there pervades society an impulse, partly human and partly divine, tending to draw events, whether of the little world of the individual life, or of the big world of the general life, into line with the movements of God's thought and affection. We who stand here this morning, in any measure sensible of the powers that are moving on irresistibly

to the working out of human destiny, must let our minds be taught to run along the shining path over which are speeding the intentions of God,—

> "That God, which ever lives and loves,
> One God, one law, one element,
> And one far-off divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves."

And in the chapter of history that we are writing, there are no lines that remain indelibly printed upon the page, except such lines as are coincident with, or as are drawing into coincidence with, the lines that are eternally laid down in the mind of God. Any actual gain that we are going to make for ourselves, any actual work that we are going to achieve as an indestructible contribution to the interests of men, must be done along horizontals and perpendiculars that are as old as the world and as divine as the author of the world. There is no merely human short cut to results that have in them promise of permanence.

There is no enterprise in our own behalf or in the behalf of others, worthy of being undertaken by us, if it is not of a kind that holds us in conscious association with Him who is the supreme worker over all,—if it is not of a kind that inclines us to seek unto Him for His direction and power. If we are going to be thorough in our act as well as sincere in our being, the religious element must stand related to the inner and outer movings of life as the light and the atmosphere of the earth stand related to all the ob-

jects with which the earth is thronged, illuminating them all, crowding themselves with gentle insistence into all the interstices of those objects till they become, each and all of them, vital with the air which they respire and scintillant with the brightness wherewith they are touched.

And this is due not simply to the allegiance which, in everything which concerns us, we owe to Him whose ownership of us is a justified ownership, and His authority over us a righteously warranted mastership, but it is due additionally to the fact that life must be maintained in the conscious presence of God in order that life may be at its best, and furthermore that our work must be done under impulses quoted from on high in order that our work may be at its best.

Something was said last Sabbath about the intellect being recognized by us as a part of that area in our individual humanity that falls properly within the divine domain: that, while it is generally secularized and counted out from the territory that God has authority over or anything in particular to do with, or any interest in, it is His, as much so as those capacities that we call the spiritual sensibilities. Now today we want to go beyond that, and carry into practical effect the doctrine of the divineness of the intellect, for example, by operating our intellect not only in the conscious presence of God, but also in the exercise of that guiding and stimulating power from God which intellect, appreciated in its innate holiness, is in a condition to receive from on high.

We emphasize in this church the necessity we are under of being morally redeemed by virtue of a divine emancipation, and as soon as we begin to recognize the fact emphasized on a previous occasion that the intellect is as much a part of God's kingdom in us as the heart is, we shall be just as prompt to allow that intellectually also we require to be redeemed by virtue of a divine emancipation. And in this you see why it is that our schools are godless. We have driven God out of our intellect, and therefore we have driven him out of the schoolhouse. Of course, the two things go together.

In order to get the kind of flowers you want, you set them out in the sunshine. You put them in soil such as will best minister to their growth, but you also let the sky down upon them and all that inundation of warm light that the sky is flooded with. That is a parable transparent enough in beauteous meaning for any one with half a thought and a quarter of an affection to seize the tender but stimulating import of. We say that it is in "Him that we live and move and have our being;" what a horde of heaven-piercing sentiments we give expression to in our exalted moments that drop back to the earth again like lead as soon as we are off of our knees and out of our closets! That one expression just quoted from the "Acts" would suffice to revolutionize our whole day-school, college and university system were it once adopted into practice, and were teachers and professors to come before their classes as something beside merely bipedal packages

of human erudition. There is something in this that can be felt that cannot quite be told. I know that for myself the only three teachers that I ever had that did anything towards laying in me the foundation of useful manhood were the three that were prophets as well as professors and all of whose learning was saturated with a widening and hallowing influence that tended, at least, to make character and to build soul, as well as to manufacture brain.

That is why our institutions of learning are as a rule far more competent to turn out educated students than to graduate accomplished men and women. It is for that reason that the goods delivered by the schools are not commensurate with the money expended upon the schools. A fact put in a child's mind does not contribute to his manhood except as that fact widens out into a pulsing reality, magnified by the wealth of its large associations, illuminated, at any rate dimly lighted, by the quiet radiance that falls off upon it from regions that can be approached by the impassioned soul rather than figured by the calculating intellect. It was, therefore, such teachers as Hopkins, Seelye and Thomas Arnold that were the great manhood promoters, and converted the institutions under their charge into a kind of manhood-manufactories, or I had better say manhood-conservatories, for manhood comes by growth not by fabrication.

Here is what the Bishop of Hereford said in regard to that prince of instructors, Thomas Arnold of Rugby, and you will see how it bears out what

was just remarked in regard to the religious element considered as an indispensable to the highest grade of intellectual endeavour,—gray matter mixed with holy passion necessary to the best style of intellectual productiveness. I quote:—"If I were called upon to express in a sentence or two my feelings in regard to Dr. Arnold's influence in school life, I should describe him as a great prophet among schoolmasters, rather than an instructor or educator in the ordinary sense of the term. His influence was stimulative rather than formative, the secret of his power consisting not so much in the novelty of his ideas or methods as in his commanding and magnetic personality and the intensity and earnestness with which he impressed his views and made them,—as a prophet makes his message,—a part of the living forces of the time."

I stood once over Arnold's grave which lies under the floor of the schoolroom where he used to teach, or rather where he used to prophesy, as the Bishop of Hereford says, and in that spot hallowed by its proximity to the ashes of the mighty dead I gained a sense of what intellect is and what it can do when, instead of being merely an indifferent function of our humanity, it stands forth under a divine baptism and warms from uninspired braininess into a holy passion. Arnold, by virtue of his hallowed intelligence, was able to lift the moral tone of the whole body of English youth. What would the world ever have known of him, what inspiration would the England of the first half of the nineteenth century

ever have derived from him if, from fear of trespassing upon the fenced preserves of Catholics, Jews, Mohammedans or atheists he had been restrained by his superiors in authority from stepping out boldly into the spiritual realm of the divine realities, and from converting the class-room into a consecrated temple of sanctified intelligence?

But the foregoing is cited only as an illustration of what comes, in the way of results, when common work, what is ordinarily thought of as secular work, is adopted on to religious ground and is prosecuted in pursuance of sacred means, with a view to holy results and in the exercise of divine power.

It is this that we have to understand by the establishment on earth of the kingdom of heaven. It means the pursuance, to a very considerable extent at least, of the aims that we already have in view, but recognizing those aims as included in God's purpose, working towards those aims by methods righteously guaranteed, under the direction of influences emanating from divine sources, and in the exercise of power divinely made over to us. It is doing the world's work, but doing it with a distinct understanding that the world is God's world, that we are God's men and women and that anything we undertake to achieve will not be well achieved, will not be achieved in a manner to *stay* achieved except as we do it in God's way, in sympathy with God's mind, and as a part of our religious life and service.

Cite, for example, the great economic problem

that is weighing so heavily upon the thought of our own times, that rending of society into two competitive and inimical factions which threaten eventual disaster of the severest kind. The way out of the situation is to be effected by no nicely calculated adjustment of relations. Such adjustment may issue in a suspension of hostilities, but a suspension of hostilities is not peace but a prelude to a breach of peace.

Apparently there is at present only a minimum of affection existing between the man who has money and the man who is trying to earn it, and there is little, if any, more affection between the earners themselves. Whether the earners club together or club one another depends principally upon how much use they think they can make of each other. "Brotherhood," although a word constantly upon the lips of labouring people, and of frequent recurrence in the resolutions which they promulgate, does not mean that these people love one another, but that they hate one another so much less than they do the capitalists that they are willing to tolerate one another for the sake of routing the capitalists. It is not affection any more than a treaty of offence and defence between two nations is affection. Such a treaty is a policy of insurance taken out as protection against a third nation that they happen to be more afraid of, or more jealous of, than they are of each other.

Such adjustment never settles anything. The knowledge which the employer has that he cannot

get along without his employé, and the knowledge which the employé has that he is dependent upon his employer, establishes no personal relation between them. The cord of necessity is not a bond of brotherhood. In fact the sense of being tied together rather precludes love than fosters it. The inevitable is always execrable. So that adjustments between these two competitive bodies cannot be relied upon as in any manner a permanent solution of the economic problem; a statement endorsed by the fact that in spite of all attempts at adjustment the struggle is annually becoming more intense.

The only certified hope that we have of pacific results of a stable kind is in taking the whole matter over upon religious and Christian ground and using the Gospel as a means of warming and melting men together instead of employing doctrines of political economy as a means of riveting them together. So long as the labourer looks upon his employer as his master, and so long as the employer looks upon the labourer as his chattel, the relation is, to that extent, one of slavery, and the abolition of any condition containing in it elements of servitude, depends now just as it did in the time of St. Paul, Philemon and Onesimus, upon the impulse imported into the world by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul said to Philemon,—"You are a Christian, and your slave, Onesimus, is a Christian; now what are you going to do about it?"

That is another illustration of what I mean by taking whatever deserves to be called the world's

work and operating upon a distinctly religious basis; as I said before, remembering that the world is all of it God's world; that He has a thought and a purpose about everything; that there is a divine way of reaching results, a divine road to travel in order to arrive; and that nothing is carried any nearer its destination by being transported upon a highway of merely human engineering. We might have been dating our letters to-day *anno Domini* 908, instead of 1908, if we had not wasted so much time doing things in our way instead of following God's way, manufacturing economies instead of adopting methods and resources offered by the Gospel, and trying to get along with a religion that yields to God only so much of life's territory as is left after dragging the great bulk of that territory in under our own unhallowed administration.

You may perhaps remember that something was said a week ago about man's sense of beauty, his artistic appreciation being, also, like the intellect, holy territory, a faculty that is to be conceived of by us as having its definite relations to the divine author of the faculty, and not only to be conceived in that way, but to be used in that way, which is a very different thing; to be exercised as an organ through which God's Spirit asserts itself and works itself out into products that while humanly fashioned are in their substance somewhat eternal and divine.

It is for that reason that what the world recognizes to-day as its best art is religious, religious in the purpose to which it is applied, but what is far more

significant, religious in its impulse, in the spirit and power with which it was created. And "created" is the only word that can be aptly used to designate it. It was inspiration,—taking the term not in the sense merely of an excited appreciation of beauty, but in its very most exalted religious import,—it was inspiration projecting itself into architecture or upon canvas with the same sort and degree of heavenly impulse with which David projected himself into Psalmody or St. John into an Apocalypse. All of the best art grows upon divine soil.

The connection between art and heaven was recognized by the ancients, who counted the muses among the gods. Medieval painting, architecture, music, were all religious, religious in subject, religious in treatment, religious in the inspired impulses in which all their products were wrought. If you have ever visited the art gallery at Dresden and stood in the chapel devoted to Raphael's Sistine Madonna you have felt the place to be a holy place. Every one who enters is quieted to an attitude and spirit of worship. The picture in its ensemble and in each of its component elements seems to be a prophetic seizure upon the contents of the heavenly world—the Madonna, herself, revealed not only as the holy mother but as the Queen of heaven, enthroned in the clouds, clouds composed of the divinely figured faces of innumerable angels, with the holy Child clasped in the embrace, both queenly and motherly, of Mary, its eyes seemingly fixed in a gaze at once serene and intense upon its own destiny and the

destiny of the world that He came among us to save.

In all this reference to the Sistine Madonna, I am thinking only of that access of power, productive power, of which one becomes possessed when he commences to live and to act in the region of things divine, or rather when he is so lifted out of himself by supernal influence as to be able to see and feel things in their holy relations, to look upon them from that point of high celestial observation where even common things are interpretable by the light that falls upon them from above. It turns an otherwise common man into a prophet, prophet of the brush, prophet of the chisel, prophet of any other inplement consecrated to holy uses and purposes. And while it is in point to say that present art will have to continue to be initiative rather than productive till there is a return to our would-be artists of that same intensity of religious enthusiasm that kindled the powers of the great masters, yet it is not of art that we are thinking primarily this morning, but of any and every field of legitimate service into which it is possible for man to enter in the doing of this world's work. We might rejoice in having inspired producers that, in the exercise of original genius, could create after the manner of the authors of the Parthenon, or of a cathedral at Cologne, or of the Oratorio of the Messiah, or of the pictured scene of the Transfiguration.

But there is a thing that we need more than we do new orders and original designs of architecture, or

a fresh vintage of statues, cartoons and symphonies. We need men and women, prophets and prophetesses of the latter day, that shall look upon all the worthy enterprises of life as threads that are woven into the tissue of God's conduct of the world and purpose for it,—men and women who shall appreciate, with a deep and tender feeling, that all of this is God's world, that we are even now His angels,—that is, His messengers,—commissioned by Him on errands of holy service, none of the world's work that we enter into so common as not to be sacred, nor our own powers of effect so abundant as not to require replenishment from divine sources; that thus our efforts may be lifted into range with the works of those who have wrought mightily and who have been able to work thus, not because of any unusual native endowment, but because they felt the sanctity of the material in which they laboured, and so have been baptized with that spirit of love, wisdom and power which always attends those whose hearts have been reached by God's touch.

XI

THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

"The greatest of these is love."—*1 Corinthians 13 : 13*

THERE are some things so true that it is impossible to prove them. Some things so exquisitely beautiful that it is impossible to make pictures of them. Some things so great that the heart is able merely to feel of them without thought being competent at all to reach around them. Such things are none the less real to us for all that no description can be made of them, or any last word be said about them. Perhaps we cannot think without language, but I know we can feel without it, and what is truest and most exquisite and greatest borrows nothing from the dictionary or the spelling-book.

It is probably the fact, it is certainly the fact, that in matters of the soul too much effort has been put into trying to phrase the great realities, to doing up large matters in little verbal packages, and making words answer for things. Epigrams and aphorisms amuse the understanding, but they leave the affections cold. They may have the glitter of an icicle, but they have the chill of an icicle, too. There are no smart things said in the Gospel, no attempt to speak words that are final and startling. Lightning fills the air with a hurricane of light; but it is the

soft, quiet rain that settles into the furrows and makes the corn grow.

Christ was not unphilosophical, but He was not a philosopher. He was not untheological, still He was not a theologian. Things that He talks about He does not define. Mostly they are not definable. Caging a sweet reality is like caging a bird, whose mellowest songs are always those that it renders in the open.

So that, although the tender attitude of the soul specified in our text comes to continuous expression in the message of our Lord, He never undertakes to tell what love is, never confuses the matter by trying to clarify it. St. Paul says that love is the greatest thing in the world and leaves it there. St. John's Epistles are fragrant with delicate references to it, but his Epistles have no glossary, and what the heart feels never need be run in the mould of a definition —never can be, I should say. It is delightful that there are so many great things—love among the rest —that while they are dark to the intellect are all white to the heart—mental problems, but spiritual transparencies, far away as the sun, but as close by and warm as the next sunbeam.

Just because this near-by thing we call love is the central fact of the Gospel, therefore the Gospel admits of being a universal Gospel. Were its central fact something more difficult, something that needed to be explained and that would therefore, in all likelihood, be differently interpreted by different people, then we should have to have a variety of Gospels

suited to the various power and quality of men's understanding. But as love needs no explanation, and means the same thing to all men everywhere and always, here and above, therefore one Gospel suffices, and, if properly presented, and suitably lived, the whole world falls within the reach of its influence and becomes amenable to its power.

It is the world's misfortune that love has not been uniformly presented as the Gospel's one imperial feature, the feature as compared with which everything else in it is a distinct secondary. Of course there are other elements gathered around it and associated with it. Christ had a great many things to say and a great many facts to emphasize beside this one fact and law of affection. There are a great many things in our astronomical system beside the sun; but the very fact that we call it the solar system is an expression of the sun's dominant centrality in that system, everything else in it mastered by the sun, warmed by it, brightened and coloured by it.

Quite like that in respect of centrality and dominance is the relation sustained by love to the other ingredients of the Christian system. It is the first point in it upon which to fix our regard, and the point still to be held steadily in view in our survey and estimate of all other points. St. Paul seems to have something of this kind in mind when he speaks of "rightly dividing the word of truth"—presenting truth in a way to preserve its due proportions and relations, putting the emphasis where emphasis be-

longs, and supreme emphasis upon the superlative point, which he says here is not hope, is not even faith, but is love.

Much mischief and a sad amount of confusion have been occasioned to even the honest hearts of people by having the supreme accent placed now upon one feature of the Lord's story—what we know as the Gospel—and now upon another feature: very much the same confusion as would be wrought in a student's mind by to-day having the sun made the controlling element in our planetary system, and to-morrow reckoning everything from the planet Mars, and day after to-morrow from the planet Jupiter, or Donati's comet.

That would result in the formation of a variety of schools of astronomy, and it is an analogous influence that operates to produce a variety of schools of Christianity, this locating of the center of gravity of the Christian system at diverse points, instead of all agreeing to find it in this one point authoritatively, and with Scripture unanimity, declared for it.

The prevalence of such segregating diversity was part humorously and part seriously illustrated by the late Bishop Brooks, when he stated that a Presbyterian does not care how a man behaves if he believes right; that a Unitarian does not care how he believes if he behaves right, and that an Episcopalian does not care how he either believes or behaves if he is only an Episcopalian—a description of the situation which I would not, of course, have quoted, had it not proceeded, as I am informed, from the

mouth of a distinguished prelate of the last-named church.

The aptness of the illustration consists only in this: that it suggests in rather a lively manner the way in which the emphasis of men's Christian regards settle at distinct points, making ecclesiastical multiplicity and contrariety a natural and necessary consequence. Any number of men, even though as pronounced in their intellectual activities as St. Paul, and as keen in their discernments, would never have gotten apart and marshalled themselves under a diversity of standards if as clearly as he and St. John, and as the Lord Himself, they had recognized, and stood to it and lived by it, that the determinative feature and the imperial quality distinguishing God Himself, and distinguishing in the same way every man born of God and a small copy of the original Christ, is love, the uncalculating outgoing of one's heart to the Father above us and the brothers that are all around.

The Gospel in its innermost genius is an appeal to the heart, not to the intellect, not to the will. The world has got to be warmed into righteousness, loved into righteousness, not reasoned into it, not driven into it. Thought that is prosecuted in a cold atmosphere leads to hell a great deal faster than it does to heaven, and so does compulsion applied under the form of menace. We should have a great deal sweeter theology and a great deal profounder theology if we theologized less, and maintained a more sympathetic closeness with the Master who did no arguing

and did no fighting, but who cured the sin-sick, not by the medicine of dogmatism, nor by the bitter pill of an impending damnation, letting the wills of men alone, not concerning Himself too much with their intelligence or the lack of it, but feeling His way gently and lovingly into that inner and deepest spot which we call the heart, and out of which are all the issues of life.

I have recently been reading the Gospels over again, and connectedly, with a view to getting as closely as possible to the very mind of Christ, to the methods of His working, to the impulses by which those methods were inspired, and to the purposes which, in it all, He was cherishing; and it is all so wonderfully personal and so startlingly simple! My reading has wrought in me the conviction that, if I am not utterly in error, we have allowed the beautiful territory of Christ's three years of ministry to be so bedimmed and suffused with the mists of antecedent Judaism, and to be so overgrown with the rank foliage of subsequent argumentation of a doctrinal kind, that the scenery proper is almost entirely blotted out, and the real beauty that we need most to see, and in whose charm we need most to have our souls bathed, is buried in the obscurity of fog and dialectics.

The thing in this recent reading of mine that has surprised me again is the very small number of things which Jesus said that strained at all the intelligence of the people He spoke to, and the very small number of things He said that could produce in them any feeling of irritation, feeling that they were being

preached at, that they were being sat upon in judgment; everything sweetly consonant with those words that He spoke concerning His own mission to men—"God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world"—and accordingly spending not so much of His time in talking and expatiating as in doing, and in doing those things that served to reveal to men the tender contents of His own heart, and thus to make an avenue through which the love-warmth that was in Him might work a gentle spring-time, and then a blossomy summer-time in the hearts of every one of those He reached out towards and touched.

We should some of us be better Christians if we spent less of our energy in trying to think the Gospel and more in learning to feel it, and learning to recognize, with the apostle who wrote our text, that an ounce of holy affection is worth more than a great many pounds of intellectual accuracy. Hard thinking about religious things, a keen investigation of the difficult problems of Christianity, is doubtless a congenial exercise to those who are competent for it. It is probably an interesting experience to listen to the hum of our mental machinery. So it must have been to St. Paul, who was a very colossus as a theologian, and a Napoleon of doctrinal research. This makes it peculiarly interesting that it was just such an one as he that writes for us in this thirteenth of Corinthians that it is to none of this that is to be accorded the first place in the schedule of Christian values, that a love is a better thing than a thought, and that candidacy for the heaven of this world or of

any other world is to be effected by the tender realization of the heart, not by the rigorous conclusions of the mind.

Herein lies the secret of divergence among Christians, and competition, and even antagonism, among churches. We have not thought too much, perhaps, but we have thought too much for the amount of our loving. The more two people think the further, in all likelihood, will they find themselves apart. Thought is a force, but it is a centrifugal force, and even inside of the Church has not been held in due check by the centripetence of affection. The original Church held together in the sweet bonds of an unstrained unity till love began to congeal into forms of frigid opinion; then it went to pieces and is to-day quite as much distinguished for its disintegration as for its unity. We talk church unity, and we plan it and organize it, and we gain it not by agreeing to disagree, not by abolishing the points wherein we differ; but by that sort of heart-approach which is wrought by the possession of the quality of love.

And, as already said, it is because love is the first fact of all facts in the Gospel of Christ that the Gospel is fitted to be a universal Gospel. All men have hearts, and love is the same thing to every heart. An idea is not the same thing to every mind, but love is the same thing to every heart. A loving smile smiled by an American woman in China does not have to be translated into Chinese in order to be understood by a Chinaman. A child can perfectly interpret the sweetness in its mother's face long be-

fore it can translate into thoughts of its own the words she utters. If thought is the soul's prose, love is its music, and you know that music will steal easily into many a spot to which words stiffly articulated would be coldly refused admittance.

In the discussion of mission problems it is claimed oftentimes that the Gospel, if it is to be carried successfully among the cultivated classes of the Orient, must be readapted to match the eccentricities of the Eastern mind. If the Gospel is a philosophy, yes. Between the mind in India and that in the West there is undoubtedly a discrepancy. But it is not to mind that the Gospel makes its primary appeal. In all matters of character—and that is the one result that the Gospel is in the world to achieve—a sound thought is not a circumstance as compared with a pure affection and affections are the same the world over. To love in Bombay or in Nagasaki is the same as to love here in Madison Avenue. In the mental structure of people in different parts of the world, and even in the same parts, there are all sorts of varieties ; but hearts are alike, and loves, like English gold, pass as coin current in all kingdoms of the world ; and whether Christ appears in Judea, or were to appear in New York or in St. Petersburg or in Canton, the soil He would cultivate would be that which lies deeper in men than anything out of which germinate their opinions, philosophies, theologies ; the soul, namely, where spring and unfold the affections, sympathies, personal tendernesses, the soil common to all, by which all men become kin, and sus-

ceptible, therefore, to the one love-Gospel of the one world-Redeemer.

Perhaps one reason why we have been a little slow in allowing to love all the ascendency claimed for it by Christ, and insisted upon by St. Paul in our text, is, that we have not altogether appreciated the wide and rich rôle that love is qualified to play in our relations to the world above and the world around.

One of the most difficult things that a man has to deal with is his will. By no direct action on his part can he do anything with it himself, and still less can anybody else do anything with it. It is inherently rigid, and yet is at the same time full of possible flexibility. It is like iron, which might be defined as metallic obstinacy, and yet is capable of being reduced to any form that the art of man chooses to bring it to. Will is a thing that it is impossible to subdue by compulsion; but there is nothing in the world that is more susceptible to the treatment of affection. Your response is complete and instantaneous to the slightest wish of one who thoroughly loves you and whom you thoroughly love.

I do not know what will is, and I do not know what love is; but I do know, and we all know, that a loving heart delights to yield to the desire of the one that its love goes out towards; that under such circumstances there is no service that can be rendered that is a reluctant service; no gift that can be bestowed that is not a spontaneous offering, going over into the hands of the recipient all resplendent with the triumphant affection of the heart that is its donor.

The very stubbornness of the will, once that will has been subdued by affection, seems to pass over into the affection itself that subdued it, and to become there an impulse of sweet tenacity.

And that is the only kind of yielding, whether as towards man or towards God, that has any value or beauty in it. And love is the only influence that will work that result. It is what fire is to the iron. It is what the sunbeam is to the frost-crystal, softening that crystal into a limpid tear-drop. Once love is there, everything is easy: it is a kind of current, love is, setting out towards God and man; a kind of sweet inundation that seizes from the banks and bears upon its bosom whatever had been lying back, stiff, stark and immovable. The nerve of affection is, then, the only chord strung within us whose vibration is able to break the silence of the soul and to fill its chambers with sweet resonance.

And not only does the love that we cherish work back in this way upon the other impulses of our own soul, so that if we love a friend it is the pleasantest thing in the world to put ourselves at the service of the friend, and if we love God it is no longer a hardship but a delight to do the will of God; but also the love that we cherish tells with working effect upon those out towards whom our love extends.

There is more in this, I am confident, than is ordinarily understood. Without attempting at all to say what love is, it is something certainly a great deal more than mere sentiment. It is not merely one of those graces of the human spirit upon which if one

looks, there comes back upon the mind of the beholder a pleasant impression, as when flowers gladden the eye with a beautiful surprise, and work no effect but that of a momentary pleasure—or when pictures stimulate in a transient way the impulses already in us, but without power to convey to us new impulses not already of our possession. Love is certainly more and other than that. It is a power of its own. I have no finely spun theory about it, but I know that it is one of those energies that work in the personal world with no less actuality and solidity of effect than that with which gravity works in the material world; as positive in its results as the flow of the electric current, or as the play of sunbeams upon the frost-fettered soil in the spring.

The soul out towards which your heart moves with an affection exempt from carnal ingredients does not remain in the state in which your heart finds it. Something goes on inside it which is the product of your soul's action. Your soul, if it is a loving soul, is a radiant center radiating both spiritual light and spiritual warmth—spiritual light which quickens the one or ones upon whom your affection bends itself into a wider and richer experience of the things which are beautiful, good and true; spiritual warmth which mellows the soil of such soul and stimulates in it the production of all those fine and delicate growths of thought and feeling and purpose which compose the soul's true life and admit it into an ever-enhancing state of power and prospect.

Now there, my friends, is the great opportunity

that is made ours, according to the measure and wealth of our love-power, of bringing in a spring-time and creating a fruit-yielding summer-time in the lives of others. The best thing, the most powerful thing, the most transforming and enriching thing that we can give in this world is our affection.

Without underrating the value of brilliant ideas, correct opinions about things terrestrial and celestial, or large enterprises humanitarian in their intent, the greatest thing, the most tremendously powerful thing, the energy that carries in it the superlative possibility of redemption of every sort and along every line is love. Ideas may amuse the intelligence, immense opinions may command the respect of the thoughtfully inclined, yet such things leave the world where they find it; but love steals its way into the interior of the soul that your heart leans towards, is an irrigating current bringing moisture to any unfruitful areas that may be contained there, and working its quiet, searching work in the soul's deep places, as the warm fingers of the sunbeam feel their gentle way into the soil and play tenderly around among the hidden roots.

"God so loved the world." The world's salvation commenced in God's heart, and is contained in the throb of every human heart that carries in it the beat of the heavenly pulse. And when our work is finished, yours and mine, the value that we have been to the world will have to be estimated by the amount of love-deposit which we have been able to leave in the treasury of the world's life.

XII

THE RELIGIOUS SENSE FUNDAMENTAL TO EXPERIENCE AND SERVICE

"Commune with your own heart and be still."—*Psalm 4 : 4.*

THE attitude of mind to which Christian preaching has to address itself to-day is quite different from that to which the pulpit made its appeal thirty years ago. The heart of man is the same now as then. The mind of man is the same now as then, but the mental attitude is changed and preaching is certain to go wide of the mark unless such altered attitude is taken account of.

In the first place the Protestant idea of independent judgment upon religious questions has to such degree taken possession of the minds of people that a dogma no longer carries by its own force. Even the Catholic church is becoming protestantized, and notably so at the present time, driven into such position by the Pope's recent reactionary encyclical. A large and influential faction of that communion is just now declaring to the Holy Father that because a doctrine has been believed and has even been substantiated by authoritative act of council, does not necessarily make its acceptance obligatory. Not since the adoption of the act of papal infallibility has any event transpired that promises to be so damaging to the prestige of the Church of Rome as the attitude just

assumed by it towards the spirit of modernism, and the blow it has struck at the growing tendency towards devout but independent inquiry.

No; it is useless for the pulpit of to-day to declare that because such and such a doctrine has been believed, in time past, and has had the formal endorsement of the Church of the past, therefore its retention in the creed of to-day becomes a rational necessity and a Christian obligation. That a doctrinal position has been held for a considerable time and with a considerable degree of unanimity of course creates a presumption in its favour, but not such a presumption as exempts it from fresh investigation and independent review. There is no opinion held by anybody in regard to any question relative to human or divine life that may not reasonably and righteously be made the subject of original inquiry. And that is to-day the popular view of the situation.

This state of the case evidently complicates the function of the pulpit, for it is distinctly easier and requires both less brain and less heart to discharge from the pulpit rounded and completed doctrines, like stones slung from a catapult, than so to enter intelligently and sympathetically into the hidden meanings of truth and of people, as to be able to bring our message to the very door of the mind, to carry it across its threshold and to deposit it within some one of the soul's hidden chambers. There has been no time when a phonograph would do so poor service as pulpiteer as at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The present is also peculiarly an age of religious inquiry. People enter the church with their minds full of questions. Not only professional doubters but honest believers are punctuating with interrogation points. This comes entirely naturally as a reaction against the previous attitude of dogmatism. The swing of the pendulum in one direction is the principal reason why it presently commences to swing in the opposite direction. Taking everything for granted easily issues in a disposition to take nothing for granted. Orthodoxy of an unthinking kind as naturally issues in heresy as a bud issues in a blossom. The spirit of inquiry is a self-propagating one. Consciousness of possessing a new power makes one curious and anxious to use that power. It is like the case of a boy with a new knife; he wants to see it cut, and there is nothing in sight too precious to be submitted to the knife's attentions.

Nor is there anything in this attitude of mind that ought to prove in any way disquieting, even if it does create for the pulpit a problem of peculiar difficulty; for there has been in past times too much tendency to take for granted, too little disposition to heed the injunction of the Apostle to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in us, and what men have called their faith insufficiently mixed with intelligent thought to distinguish it from credulity. The present posture of mind, the interrogative posture, is one that was certain to come. It is a forward step in the movement towards religious conditions of life that will be seen and felt to be more sane, more

square with the truth and with human necessities of intellect and heart. The pendulum swings both ways but the hand on the dial-plate goes on marking the hour.

The difficulty which the pulpit experiences is still further augmented by the fact that the attitude of present thought is not only interrogative but scientific. More distinctly than ever before it is recognized that all truth belongs together and is livingly combined in an organized whole, and that therefore specific truths cannot be taken out from that whole and treated on an independent basis of their own. At one time a preacher, in order to be able to hold the confidence of his people, needed only to be versed in the contents of the Bible, the hymn-book and the catechism. But that to-day does not suffice, and our theological seminaries are widening out their curriculum of study with a view to meeting the enlarged demand of the times. No science, even that of theology, is a science by itself. Its correlations are with every other science. God is in everthing, and every existing thing, material, personal and historic, constitutes a distinct chapter and verse of the great original volume of divine revelation; and all of that on the one hand and the book of written revelation on the other hand constitute the obverse sides of the one comprehensive apocalypse of God's mind, heart and will. And while no pulpiteer's knowledge is complete enough to more than begin to comprise all of this, yet the scientific requirements of the times are such that no man dare preach as religious truth

that which is felt to be contradicted by any other kind of truth, so that we are obliged either to preach fewer things or to know more things; at any rate, to cover only so much ground as will be assailed neither by the moral consciousness nor the skilled intelligence of the hearer.

It is for that reason that I find peculiarly attractive, as well as particularly safe, those lines of inquiry and of devout meditation that deal with matters sunk so far into the depths of the human consciousness as to run no risk of being dislocated by any lever of subtle investigation that may be thrust down into them. We may well feel ourselves secure when we do not go beyond that which is testified to by the universal consciousness. A great deal besides that is of course true, and not only true but essential to the complete upbuilding of a man either in knowledge or in holiness, but the groundwork of it all, so far as we ourselves are practically concerned, lies down at the deep level of consciousness. The alphabet of all truth and of all religion is in the man's soul, and if he would spend somewhat more time in acquainting himself with that alphabet he would be able to spell out a great many words that are at present too long for his comprehension.

One occasion, I am sure, of the miscellaneous unbelief that prevails regarding the details of religious truth, is in the fact that we do not keep in constant touch with such basal truths as we do believe and as we are not able to disbelieve; and to the fact that we do not live in stated fellowship with so much of

religion as is really nothing less than an axiom of the human soul, something that is there, and there to stay, and which while we may suffocate it cannot expatriate it. For all such purposes the soul is a fine place to be quietly at home in. There is more of the kingdom of God inside us than we can find anywhere else. Unheavenly as, in one sense of the word, we may be, we are never so near heaven as when we are thoughtfully alone.

We are born into a religious world. We are created with a religious sense. Every language has to have certain terms that are religiously relevant, and every one uses those terms, has to use them, whatever may be the intensity of his own religious denials. We may cover up the foundation of our intellectual and moral being, but covering up the foundation does not efface nor unsettle the foundation; and that foundation is continually asserting itself, but often in a way so quiet and unobtrusive that we have no realization of it unless we hold our attention steadily to it. We ought to understand that in all the relations of life there is a great deal that lies so deeply and stealthily imbedded in our experience as rarely to become matter of distinct realization with us. Whether we call it subconsciousness, or name it in some other way, it is one of the primary facts of life and one of the most influential. We are constantly acting at the impulse of motives without at all appreciating what the impulse *is* by which we are actuated. The train moves but does not understand what moves it.

Very few people take the time to study into the underworld of their own life and life-processes. We are never so little at home as when we are at home. We know more about other people than about ourselves, and are more familiar with the movements of the stars than with the astronomy of our own souls. And the principal loss that we are suffering by this policy of self-neglect is that we fail to realize how definitely the foundations of the soul are levelled with the realities of religion and how close upon an appreciation of God and of eternal things the soul is in all the truest moments of its inner experience and in all the finest endeavours of its outward activities.

One of the most serious facts of human experience is sin, a fact so serious that the whole policy of what we know as the scheme of redemption was primarily contrived to cope with it; and only that system of faith, doctrine and life can justly lay claim to the title of Christian that puts in the forefront the truth divinely announced that the incarnation was for the purpose of saving the world from its sins.

Now there are various interpretations that we can put upon sin. We can treat a sin as being merely a moral mistake. We can regard it as being only an irresponsible legacy from a sinful parentage. We can think of it as being nothing more than the legitimate outcropping from our animal nature, the warranted self-assertion of the material side of our complex being and therefore not exactly sinful, but rather the natural tone sounded by one of the lower vibrating

strings of our humanity. Or we can, without committing ourselves to any doctrine bearing upon us with uncomfortable pressure, contemplate our sin as being a violation of the conventional ideas of the more respectable element of society; or go so far even as to think of it as being a transgression of the moral law,—attaching to the phrase "moral law," however, no signification over-earnest in its exactions; for a mere "law," if carelessly thought of, becomes that impersonal and visionary thing that touches down to no sensitive spot in our deeper nature.

We are told that one day David committed a sin, a twofold sin, one that in each of its two elements was exceedingly gross. We are not told that he was at all disturbed by it, and apparently he was not. In what distant way he may at the moment have speculated upon it is left to each one to imagine. His look we should judge was only an outward look. I mean by that that he evidently did not confer with his own heart upon it. Perhaps he preferred not to. There was a good deal in David's heart and he may not have cared to meet it. Inside of one's own soul is the last place that one cares to be when he is thinking of doing something that he has moral doubts about. We are more afraid of ourselves than of anybody else, God included.

But a little while subsequent to the commission of that double sin David was taken hold of by a man who was as profound in the matter of his preaching as he was shrewd in the method of it, and he led

David's thoughts along in a way that compelled him to come in from outside and to enter into his own heart, to see the sin in that hidden place in his nature where he committed it, to view it at short range, to interview it and to listen to the whole of the story it had to tell him. And it was a great story. And that is what interests me just now. It was a great story. It is always the case that the further one enters into his own heart the more he hears and the more he sees.

And what David saw there was not the presence of either Uriah or Bathsheba,—the two whom he had wronged,—but the *divine* presence, and his instant cry was,—"Against Thee, O God, and Thee only, have I sinned." He had entered far enough into the depths of his own being to feel the quiver of the primal cords with which his nature was strung and those strings vibrated with suggestions of God. The kingdom of God is within us and he found it there. The deep original voices of the soul ring true. As I said to you, the under-consciousness of our nature is saturated with a heavenly atmosphere. The final proofs of God are neither in the sky to be pulled down, nor in the ground to be dragged up.

It is a thrilling stroke in the old story of the prodigal that when "he came to himself" he was in the way to finding his father. It is always so. It is a strange thing, but however unheavenly we may be, we are close on the edge of heaven when we come alone so near to our heart as to be able to hear it beat. All the religion fundamentally that there is in

the Bible or in the revelations of nature is in the witness of each man's own inner sanctuary when he enters it deeply enough to come under the spell of its testimony. The problem is not so much to *learn* to believe as to *know* that we believe.

It is a half consciousness of eternal and of divine things also that lies at the basis of the great enterprises into which men throw themselves, looking to the weal of man, the ennoblement of society and the propagation of higher ideals of wisdom and of life. It is a thing to remark and to emphasize that men never work without a motive, and that great work means a great motive. If you project yourself into an undertaking so vast that you know that your own wisdom and the combined wisdom of those associated with you is not sufficiently astute to give it safe direction, so vast, too, that you know that the achievement of your endeavour cannot be attained till long after you and those associated with you have come to the end of your earthly mission, it is because there lies somewhere in your bosom the dreaming or the drowsing thought that somehow there is a hand in which the threads of human purpose are strongly and omnipotently held; that the cause to which the few swift years of your own life are committed is certainly going to be taken care of; that there is a meaning in the cause that transcends human computation, a value that can be calculated only in terms of the eternal.

People do not work these things all out into lines of deliberate thought, and more is the pity. If the

hundreds of thousands who, in our Civil War, died a sacrificial death for their country had held it as a part of their philosophy that a certain number of centuries more or less would wipe out all the results of the struggle and that the time would eventually come when what seemed so valuable in '61 would cease forever to be valuable, and that all of what appeared to be great principles at stake would cease to be principles and become the unremembered nothings of a world out of which love of country, love of man and the glory of a splendid civilization had dropped into eternal oblivion, those hundreds of thousands would never have laid themselves upon a bleeding altar.

Men do not spend their lives in that way for anything less than what they believe to be the realities of the highest order, and realities of the highest order have in them a seasoning, a dash of the eternal, that guarantees their indestructibleness. A half-sense of God and a half sense of eternal times that are on the way, is what braces men to self-expending achievements. It is because there are so many men in whom there is a half consciousness of great and divine meanings, meanings that never wear out, and a God who can be counted on to see great enterprises through to a triumphant finish, that the world keeps moving on and goes climbing up the steep grade of a triumphant destiny.

Oh, yes! there is a lot of religion in the soul, great masses of holy sleepiness, beatific dreaminess, men and women all around us that are working great

works in the twilight, only half suspicious of the sun that is the other side of the hills and that sprinkles with twilight the shut-in valleys that these great workers are toiling in, and that work their great works only because they are standing near enough to the sunshine to be touched with its baptism, thinking all the time, perhaps, that they are godless, and yet working their beautiful works only because God is looking upon them, and because, like the two Emmaus disciples, their hearts are mysteriously burning within them while they walk with Him, not knowing, hardly guessing, perhaps, that it is He.

The heart is a man's own best prophet. We can find there what is not discoverable in any book and, if allowed to do so, it will speak to us with a persuasiveness impossible to any other advocate. Only it will not suffice to stand off and survey that heart at a speculative distance. The Scripture injunction is,—"*Commune* with your own heart." The soul is its own most solemn sanctuary. To each man his own soul is the center of the universe, the one point from which alone the facts of his experience fall into interpretable shape. It is a very human spot, but it is equally a divine spot. For while it is there only that we can trace infallibly the lines of small and also of splendid motives that actuate us and the daily story of our life becomes unfailingly legible, it is there, too, that is the uncovering of God!

It has not been the aim of our meditation this morning to encourage an habitual temper of introspection, but at the same time there are things, and

the truest and finest things that the world has to offer us, that never stand out so distinctly lined as when viewed by us from the holy of holies of our own heart. The heart is its own truest sanctuary. It may be a small place but it has a boundless outlook. As we have just seen, the largest meanings spell themselves out there in letters that are intelligible to both thought and feeling. It is there that we stand close to the margin of the world and close to the edge, therefore, of the world that is transcendent.

It is there that objects which present themselves to us are calculated in their interior value. When we are out in the midst of things with our estimates embarrassed by the limitations of the conventional, righteousness, for example, is almost anything that is reputable, and sin almost anything that fails of being morally precise,—terms, both of them, rather carelessly given to conditions that are rather carelessly considered. Viewed in the sincere atmosphere of a heart that is close-closeted with itself righteousness stands possessed of a certain limitlessness of meaning, and like the big waves of the sea rolls itself outward on every side in interminable circles of billowy expanse. And sin, too, as in the quoted case of David, becomes as prodigiously horrible as righteousness is felt to be unspeakably glorious, and the one as the other, forms through which the presence of God discovers itself to the soul.

Our thoughts are never so true, so steady, so searching, so penetrating, as when we are devoutly

alone, for it is then that there expands within us a sense of the presence of the soul's great original Companion; everything becomes touched, therefore, with a glow of meaning that streams in from the other world. It is then that the things we do, not only make out a part of to-day but are seen as threads that are being woven into the tissue of all the years. The purposes we are seeking to attain become part of the plan that is being worked out through the ages. Pettiness drops out. The universe is back of us. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera." All nature is aglow with God: all history alive with God. The souls we love are no longer things of a year or of eighty years, but throbbing values, inlaid with reality enough to carry them unwrecked over the shoals of mortality.

I have ceased thinking degrading thoughts about the human soul. The heavens are wonderful, but when I have surveyed them I want to kneel in the sanctuary of my own spirit and meditatively view them from there, and then they become to me a great deal more than scattered lights sprinkled athwart the sky and I get back on to the ground of the nineteenth Psalm. The Bible is wonderful, but when I read it I want to creep away into my own little holy of holies, and, in the silence that is so breathless as to be almost audible, let its truths tell themselves out to me again in my still communings.

"The kingdom of God is within you." The waves of a sea, that has no further shore, wash the margin of the soul in the moments when it is

devoutly and absolutely alone, for the Spirit of God always broods in a heart that is isolated and quiet, writing out with large meanings the things of time, translating them into terms of the eternal and the divine, thus equipping the soul to enter in a large, stimulated, and masterful way into the larger or smaller enterprises of life, because able to realize that even that which seems common and small is charged with the potencies of greatness, and those things which are only temporal and human transfigured by the light let fall upon them from above.

XIII

THE PROBLEM OF PERPETUAL YOUTH

"So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab; according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor. But no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated."—*Deuteronomy 34: 5–7.*

THERE is in this obituary notice an element of mystery that invests the recital with very special interest and fascination. There is so much suggested in it that remains suggestion only, that our thought is instantly set on tiptoe. It is like looking at a picture the larger part of which is covered; the interest at once transfers itself from so much of it as is in sight to the portion that is behind the curtain.

We are instantly set wondering as to what were the circumstances of his death, and why he died, for he was not an old man,—old in years, evidently, but not old otherwise, and it is the being old otherwise that is the really significant thing about age. Why should one who was so conspicuously in the eye of the times have died without any one being present to witness his decease, and without there being any one to assist at his burial or even to know the place of his burial? You will recall the second verse of our

text :—" And He (that is God) buried him in a valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." The event has been very delicately done into verse the authorship of which is not stated, the first stanza of which is :—

" By Nebo's lonely mountain
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab,
There lies a lonely grave.
And no man dug that sepulchre,
And no man saw it ere,
For the angels of God upturned the sod
And laid the dead man there."

All that seems to have been known about Moses' departure was simply that he disappeared, and whether it was by the ordinary process of decease cannot be told. Our text states the enigma without solving it. We have to leave the matter where we found it, but such things make one think, and it is very broadening to stand as near as one can to the edge of the darkness and to look searchingly into the depths of it and see if one cannot discover the glimmer of a distant light. Elijah also is recorded to have passed from this life into the other in a manner similarly mysterious. It may be mere coincidence, but it was just these two, gathered out of this world by methods so exceptional and inexplicable, that centuries later appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. Even if it is coincidence only it is interesting, but we are left wondering

whether it is not more than coincidence. It is probably safer to attach more, rather than less, significance to all such mystic features of the Bible story.

But less mysterious, and of more practical use to us, is that other fact stated in this obituary record, that while Moses died at an advanced age so far as years were concerned, he was an old man in no other respect, and had somehow solved the problem of being perpetually young. He did not fade out. He simply stopped here, to begin, we suppose, somewhere else. His decease, or by whatever other term you name it, is rather what we might call the frontier station where he simply changed trains but without leaving the track or intermitting his journey.

Such transition, around which we have unfortunately gathered all sorts of lugubrious associations, appears to be in the nature of things. Something similar to it had, for too many geologic ages, been a part of the world's history, for us to suppose that the event we designate as death is visited upon men as a recompense for sin. Sin does not cause death, however much, as the apostle suggests, it adds to its terrors. Perfect love casteth out fear. When an aged New England saint had arrived at the frontier station and a friend asked him how death seemed to him, "Very much like going into the next room," was his answer. All these things, I imagine, are going to look very natural and very simple to us when we have passed through them and view them from the other side of the frontier. To a child be-

fore it has passed the gate the great unknown world looks very appalling and weird, but once outside it soon comes to find it to be but an extension of its own father's dooryard.

Moses certainly had lived a burdened life. He had accomplished very much more than most. The responsibilities involved in emancipating an enslaved people and in founding a new nation would seem almost of necessity to involve a terrific and wasting expenditure of spiritual nerve and physical brawn. Add to that the framing of a moral code that was composed with sufficient insight and with sufficiently long perspective to make it, in its fundamental portions at least, as valid for the twentieth century after Christ as for the century twenty-five hundred years earlier. Judging from things as we know them today we should feel the impulse to say that such a man earned the privilege of decrepitude by the time he was sixty, and the privilege of senility by the time he was eighty. It is remarkable that it was not till after he was eighty that he did his best work. He treated himself,—or Providence treated him,—very much as skilled horticulturists treat choice fruit-trees, let them bear only leaves for a good while before letting them begin to bear peaches and pears.

We have a way of laying a great deal of stress upon the mere matter of years. If a person has reached fourscore, we call him an old man. Perhaps he is, and perhaps he is not. Some are antiquated at forty and some are juvenile at eighty. All depends. There are other elements in the problem beside that

of clock-ticks and heart-beats. Time is simply that point of eternity where we happen just now to be standing. There is a way of cutting off a period of years from the whole range of infinite duration and making a separate thing of it, and there is another and a larger way of feeling that eternity is itself somehow involved in the period so cut off, as we might conceive of the entire Atlantic as being present in a minute way in each of the drops that compose it. The character of our life and its richness will depend a good deal upon how large and rich are the thoughts which we entertain in regard to life. To think in a small way about human existence makes existence itself small, and makes people willing and perhaps glad to end it.

There are some things to which such terms as time and age are distinctly inapplicable. It is rather enlarging to our mind and to our apprehension of things to reflect that even now there is a region of realities in which years do not count, and have no place, and are not even thought of. It is not an uncommon thing to speak of the hills as eternal. Undoubtedly such mode of speech is an exaggeration, but we mean by it only that the hills have existed so long and will still continue to exist so long that it scarcely occurs to ask how old they are or how old they will be before they *cease* to exist. They appear to us so nearly the same that they always have been that computation of age seems almost foreign to the occasion.

But there are other realities of the present day that are distinctly eternal to-day and upon which it could

never occur to us to inscribe a date, the realities that never are thought of by us, never could be thought of by us, as coming in any manner under time-relations. Two times ten are twenty. No one would ever ask how long that had been true, nor how long it will be before it ceases to be true. It is very much to our advantage to let our minds move along over the track we are just now pursuing, and, by dwelling for an instant upon certain things that clocks and watches have nothing to do with, inoculate our minds with a sense of the timeless and the eternal. It lets us into a world that is altogether distinct from the one that we are usually busy in.

Besides that we are constantly using words that carry with them a meaning a thousand times vaster than any we may be conscious of at the moment of speaking them. All such terms as "truth," "beauty," "righteousness," and many others that are the like of them, are always to be thought of as lying quite out of range with objects that can be described by stating in what year they began and at what age therefore they are now arrived. Such reflections help us to realize that the realm in which things are reckoned by years, a realm which is filled up with cradles, coffins and timepieces is not the only realm that there is even now; that the world that is yearless is a present fact, that the most significant features, even of the world that is administered by the almanac, are the commodities that we appropriate from the realm that knows nothing about days, years or centuries and that is therefore eternal.

And to realize that the best and finest things we know anything about are destined to a duration that puts them entirely out of the range and scope of calendars and chronometers gives to us, I am sure, that enlarged view of things and that quickened feeling of the nearness to us of the eternal that makes timelessness an easier thought to us and that makes easier to us the idea of being ourselves in some important sense exempt from time-restrictions, and free therefore to laugh at the coming and going of the years and to revel already in the width of our liberty and in the joy of an eternal hope.

Created as we are in the image of God, who Himself certainly never grows old, and of whom it would never naturally occur to us to think in terms of years, the thought easily suggests itself that there must be something pertaining to *us*, too, that connects us with the same timeless, yearless realm in which His life is lived, something in us that it would not be quite proper to date and that never exactly admits of being thought of as old, however many times we remember the old year to have gone out and a new year to have come in. With some this thought is a very distinct one, mounting up even to the point of what we may call a definite experience. A man may be very much sobered by his responsibilities as they keep piling themselves upon his mind and heart but that does not prevent his feeling himself to be thoroughly young whenever he has the opportunity for a week or a month to get out from under the yoke of those responsibilities.

This sense of being personally independent of the clock is discouraged somewhat, discouraged a good deal, perhaps, by the bad way in which the body is apt to behave. The body is very distinctly an affair of the years. It ages. As Scripture states it,—"the outward man perisheth," more or less rapidly according to the way we treat it and according to the constitution bestowed upon it at birth. But at its best it will last only so long and was not intended to last any longer. And it is this realization on our part that the body is subject to the despotism of the years that operates to cloud our consciousness that our inner, spiritual nature is heir to a finer and more generous régime. Spending as much of our time as we have to, or think we have to, in trying to keep our bodies out of the grave, it is not strange if we become so insensible to those interior possibilities of perpetual youthfulness, as to compute our spiritual estate by the movements of the same hour-hand with which we estimate our corporeal duration.

To this should be added the fact that with the great majority of people their interests, the best interests they know much about are devoted to things that are in their very nature evanescent. St. Paul says,—"while we look not at the things which are seen," which he says are temporal, calculable by the clock. But those are just the things that people, most of them, *are* looking at, occupied with, bound up in. So that their whole experience becomes impregnated with the notion that there is nothing anywhere, even within them, that is not branded with the

mark of transitoriness, and everything of every kind moving to the click of the swinging pendulum,—getting out of youth and verging towards senility.

There is scarcely anything sweeter in life or more winsome than a man or woman whose bodily years have mounted up into the high figures, but whose thoughts are like the long thoughts of a child, and whose spirit still wears the dewy freshness of the morning, one who, like the hero of our chapter, was a physical veteran but whose mind and heart were one hundred and twenty years young. And when we meet such ones and come into touch with the intimacy of their lives we are likely to feel that that is the way that things ought always to be, and that there is that in us, in each of us, which, if it were treated rightly, would be like truth and like beauty which never become furrowed, a little even like God who is no older to-day than when first the morning stars sang together.

We are certainly not dealing with ourselves as faithfully as we might have done and as it is our proper destiny to do, if, when the anniversary of our physical birth occurs and we think how many years ago it was that we lay in the cradle, we have not also some feeling at least that the years have not touched us, or at most that they have served us only as the atmosphere serves the bird, which merely gives the bird support against which its wings may act in lifting it further from the ground and into the sky.

And it is by our contact and association with things that themselves never grow old that our own

perpetual youth becomes maintained and the sense of that youth fostered. There used to be a man out here in Madison Square, who on warm sunny days I have many times encountered, and who on such days was always encompassed by a flock of children. He encouraged their presence, their close presence, out of the feeling that he was thereby able to absorb into his worn physical system some of their young vitality. It is in something the same way that by our close touch with the realities that exist entirely independently of time,—and that carry no date,—we are not only kept young, in that part of us which ought never to be anything but young, but that we are made conscious of being continually young.

It contributes to this result if we let the fellowship of our thought and feeling be with those things that draw off our regard from the limitations of life and that set our souls upon ground that is wide and unencompassed, and that gives unhindered space for roaming and pasturage. There can be no sense of years or of age to one, to any one, while living in companionship with the great things of God's material universe. Everything there is so vast as to render one's watch invisible and the ticking of it inaudible.

It is in the like manner that we are affected by our entrance into the broad and colossal interests of the world's life. Everything like frontier is set so far back and whatever smacks of the calendar so crowded out of view that sense of time and age is vetoed and our spirit lifted into that untrammelled region where

the small distinctions of to-day and to-morrow, this year and the next, fade into invisibility like morning clouds that melt under the clear shining of the sun. Everything that is transient gives to us a consciousness of being ourselves transient. If we are engrossed with things that belong to time and that therefore become old, there will be fostered in us a sense that we are ourselves aging; and only that soul that devotes a certain portion of its experience to realities that are instinct with the spirit of perpetual youth, can hope to be saved the discomfort so easily left in the wake of advancing years, or be spared the pathetic suggestions that so readily intrude themselves when we read the ninetieth Psalm or when we watch the progress of the hour-hand along the dial of the clock.

But our meditation this morning would be ended without being finished if we omitted to mention that the one supreme secret of a soul that feels its youthfulness and that knows itself to be untouched by the years, lies in the indwelling of the Spirit that is from above. With God one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day, which is to say that there is no calendar and no timepiece in the divine experience, no aging, no getting away from the beginning, nor approaching towards the end.

And now there is no deeper, richer truth pertaining to the life of a Christian than that what God experiences in this or in other matters, we become sharers in that experience to the extent that we are made sharers in His Spirit. It is in Him, primarily,

that in all respects we may hope to be lifted out of limitation into glorious enfranchisement. It is the supreme prerogative of the Christian life to be hid with Christ in God so that in all that relates to our spiritual being all things range themselves towards us as they range themselves towards Him, in such way that if we be thus gathered within the folds of His investing Spirit, sin cannot touch us any more than it touches Him, nor death affect us as it does not affect Him, nor years put a blight upon us as they put no blight upon Him. It is one of the possibilities of the Christian that ought to be becoming more and more real to us that we are not properly the subject and victim of those limitations sought to be put upon us by the influences working at the lower levels of life; that while there is a definite kingdom of matter to which the body requires to be in a measure subservient, there is a distinct realm that is made ours in Christ, wherein it is our privilege to treat with holy disdain the mandates of the lower imperialism, to enjoy even now some, at least, of the prerogatives of the children of God, and to realize ourselves as possessed of a life too elevated to be classed with the vitality of the flesh, too wide-ranging in its powers, too profound in its experiences, to come in under the time measurements by which the commonplaces of existence require to be computed and spaced.

XIV

FIDELITY TO INCOMPLETE FAITH

"And straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe.'"—*Mark 9 : 24.*

IT is the clause following,—"Help thou mine *unbelief*,"—that is more commonly availed of for pulpit uses. But in this particular instance, as in all instances, a man's belief is of vastly greater significance than his unbelief; and, besides that, it is only by one's distinct possession of belief that one is ever able to get the *better* of his unbelief. So that clearly it is the first of the two clauses rather than the second that makes prior claim to our thought and interest.

It is to the moral and intellectual credit of the man in question that he was thoughtful enough to be able to state his case in a manner at once so simple and thorough. It evidenced a certain preparation of mind that must have made him interesting to the Lord; and we may suppose that even the Lord was not above being especially interested in interesting people. You will remember an illustration of that as given in St. Mark's account of the way that Christ's feelings were drawn out towards the rich young man who was able to give so good an account of himself and to sustain so well Christ's examination of him on

his previous record. It is only those people that are sufficiently in earnest to be disposed to think with some seriousness that the Lord can either find attractive or be in a situation to do much for. He is exceedingly generous, but does not bestow His gifts at random.

By one means or another the father of this invalid child had reached a definite conclusion, a confident conviction,—confident up to a certain point. He may have witnessed Christ's miracle-working; he may simply have heard the rumour of it; and the conviction so formed, though not a large one, a full-grown one, was a pronounced fact with him—a fact with sufficient force in it to bring him first to the disciples and then to their Master. So that when the Master promised to heal the child on condition of the father's faith the father was able instantly to assert his faith, not that he had much,—which Christ gives us to understand is never necessary,—but that he had *some*, and that *some* he stood by; that *some* he was distinctly conscious of, and because he was conscious of it, and acted at the impulse of it, the rest of his matter was all taken care of, his petition granted and the child cured.

The particular feature of the case that we shall let interest us is that this man had sufficiently probed his experience, had narrowly enough looked into his own mind and heart, to find there the traces,—very minute,—of a conviction that Christ could do for his boy what he wanted done. Now the inner contents of his mind and heart were composed partly of trust

and partly of distrust. Some he believed and some he didn't. But the thing that his eye lit on first, the thing which made the prior and larger figure in his eye was what he *did* believe,—the amount of conviction that he had, and not the amount that he hadn't. It is that which makes our man interesting. Most people situated as he was, with no larger a basis of fact to go upon, would have seen their little struggling assurance go to the bottom, swamped by the inundating tide of uncertainty. In this instance, on the contrary, the small speck of confidence, like Noah's ark in the deluge, was borne on the *top* of the flood, not submerged by it; so that to him the most noticeable feature in the scene, and that which he particularized first, was his *possession* of faith, not his lack of it.

All of which denotes a particular cast of character, and people possessed of that cast you can do something with and something for,—the other kind you cannot. There is a certain mental languor, a certain moral indifference, characterizing some of us that prompts us to feel first after what is not there, rather than to seize upon and appreciate what *is* there. It is clearly a defect of character and is very common. It is the spirit that animates the greater part of what we call criticism. The word which properly means the act of passing judgment upon the excellence of a person, thing or performance, has come to mean finding the faults that there are in the person, thing or performance;—not emphasizing what there *is* in them, but what there is not in them. It would be safe to say

that nine-tenths of criticism is a process of fault-finding. If you are called upon to write the review of a book you will very probably feel that your critic does not stand up to the requirements of what a critic is supposed to be unless your characterization has put well to the fore the respects wherein the book fails of its intended purpose. You have learned the same tendency from your perusal (if you peruse them) of newspaper criticisms of public performances, musical or theatrical. One actor who has behaved foolishly, one musician who has played badly, will be so written up as to throw a cold blanket of discredit over the entire exhibit. And all of that means that the critic is such sort of a person as to be less susceptible to the power of what is fine than to the influence of what is off-colour, less impressed by what is there than by what *fails* to be there,—all of which constitutes an indictment against the intellectual or æsthetic appreciation and robustness of the critic.

Just in the same quality of negative perversity lies the secret of a great deal of man's unhappiness. We should all of us be very fairly comfortable if we were as prompt to emphasize the blessings we have as we are quick and persistent to brood, in a lachrymose way, over the blessings we have not received, and to make a heaven out of what we possess instead of a quite different kind of place out of what is not ours.

It would not be just to ourselves to say that the tendency illustrated by these instances proceeds from a depraved preference for the things that are lacking or that are defective. The musical critic who draws

the wet brush of disapprobation over an entire musical recital because the soloist did not take sky C without wincing is not moved to his objurgations because he is fond of a false note, but because the chords in his own soul are not so delicately strung as to take the thrill they ought to have taken from all the notes splendidly sung that were not false.

Men's dealings with the Scriptures have, as you know, been, in numerously repeated instances, of precisely the same tenor. In cases with which you and I are presumably perfectly familiar, a difficult story like that of Jonah and the whale have done more to avert men's minds from the Bible than all the splendid power and sweet beauty of the Gospel have done to win them to the Bible. They are not so impressed with the moral grandeur of the Book as they are by what seem to them its occasional slips and awkwardnesses. Such people would pick for spots on the sun, and decline, therefore, to be illuminated by it, if its sheen were not so physically dazzling that their critical taste had no opportunity to get in its depreciatory work.

The propensity we are just now taking account of is, then, you perceive, one that works with a wide variety of effects, and effects that are a sad hindrance to the soul's progress towards larger things and fuller attainments. The man in our story would never have succeeded in getting anything done for his child if he had as definitely put what he did not believe before what he did believe, as most people are in the habit of doing. It is a case where the nerves

which should respond, the chords which should be set vibrating at the slightest impact, are strung so loosely that they answer back with only a slow and heavy resonance. There is that lack of inner alertness that practically robs truth of its pungency and that makes all reality to be more than half unreal. It is that absence of a keen moral or mental zest which renders insipid whatever is offered to it as sustenance,—like a man so conditioned physically that, when at table, he is appreciative of all the imperfections of the cuisine because he approaches the repast with so little wholesome and healthy appetite for the excellencies of the cuisine. The truth is vivid enough; it is only a matter of the apathy and torpidity of our access to it.

That that is the correct statement of the case we have all of us sometimes felt when some sudden event of life, some sudden jar in the kaleidoscope of experience, has abruptly shaken into new arrangement the features of our prospect, has swept the mist out of our spirit's inner atmosphere, and drawn before us, in keenly and shiningly distinct outline, objects that had been obstinately lying beyond the horizon of our discovery. Quite a matter-of-fact illustration of our principle is afforded by the instance of the boy who one day said to his father that he had decided to give up Bible-reading and churchgoing, as he had ceased to have any belief in that kind of thing. "My boy," said he, "if that is the mote that has gotten into your eye and that is operating to obscure your moral and religious vision, if you will come into my room I will extract it in a very few

minutes." The boy was not happy while the extraction was in progress, nor altogether comfortable for some time afterwards, but it is related that the lad's eye was strangely clarified and his appreciation of divine things wonderfully quickened. The father understood that the young fellow's religious nerve had become relaxed, that it needed straining to the point where it would again become musically vibrant. His policy was a harsh one, but was dictated by love, probably, by good sense, at any rate, and as to being harsh, it was no more so than the policy of discipline which Providence has many a time pursued in bringing a soul out of infidel and ætheistic doubt into a condition of assurance and clear seeing. There is a certain tonic in discipline that puts fresh nerve into people's apprehension of things and that enables them to see the stars before they do the blank spaces that lie between the stars.

It was the tendency to fasten first upon what he *did* believe, rather than upon what he did *not*, that renders so interesting to us and so satisfactory the character of the man born blind and whose eyes Christ opened. There was much in the circumstances that must have perplexed the poor fellow. When questioned upon the cure that had been wrought upon him there was no intelligible account that he could give of it. He apparently knew nothing about the person that had healed him, and had no philosophical explanation for the results that had been thereby effected. All of those elements of uncertainty could easily have started in him serious

doubts as to the permanence of the benefits apparently secured to him. A natural born doubter will doubt if there is anything to hang a doubt upon, and will even extemporize occasions for doubt if there are none ready at hand.

But with all that there was of a puzzling and therefore distracting nature in the incident, it did not occur to the man to be puzzled. His mind worked positively before it worked interrogatively; fastened first upon what *was* there before it went roaming off after what was *not* there; rested in the one distinctly experienced fact that, whereas he had been blind, now he could see. His soul was anchored to a definitely realized fact, and that fact therefore he kept close to, and when it came time for him to act, as it did presently, he acted under the *stress* of that fact. He had too clear a vision of what he could see to be lost in the bewilderment of a thousand uncertainties that would certainly have overwhelmed him if he had allowed himself to slip away from the one sharply drawn line of what his new experience told him, kept telling him, and kept telling him in a way to drown out all those mutterings of uncertainty that would otherwise have made themselves fatally audible.

And the consequence was that pretty soon we find him attaching himself to Christ, not simply as a grateful admirer, but as a believer, in the strong, evangelical sense of the term,—which was a result that would have been made impossible if, instead of resting confidently in, and standing loyally by, the one thing of which he was sure, he had abandoned the

ground which he was able with full assurance of conviction to occupy, and had frittered away his powers of thought over the host of mysterious contingents with which the one positive fact of power to see was so thickly beset.

This, however, should not be interpreted as a criticism upon habits of inquiry. Knowledge never increases except as we go on prosecuting lines of interrogation, and continue to tread paths that extend themselves further and further into regions of the unknown, and it is evident from the closing passage of the story that the blind man did that, but it is equally evident that the lines he pursued radiated from the one fixed point,—never forgotten by him,—the one fixed point of what was to him an unshakeable conviction that, whereas he was blind, now he could see. He kept himself roped to that hook of assurance, and so by keeping a grasping hold of that rope was never in danger of getting so far afield as not to be able to find his way back again.

Now, I am encouraged to this line of thought because of my assurance, wrought both by observation and experience, that the foundations of a safe religious and Christian belief are constitutionally laid in the heart of every man. That they are there not because we have constructed them by any process of our own thought, but because they are implanted by an act of divine endowment, and that the difficulties of faith are due primarily, if not altogether, to the habit of taking our feet off from ground that we feel to be firm, and instead of taking constant counsel with

so much of truth as we are assured of, neglecting our convictions and making a confidant only of our doubts and misgivings.

The man in our story was able to believe more,—and evidently desired to believe more,—because he kept his mind in faithful and vital touch with the little that he was already profoundly assured of. It is a case of attempting to climb without taking any care to keep the ladder close down upon underlying support. All wholesome faith, whether religious or otherwise, is a growth, a process of vital expansion from below upward, and the maintenance of that growth is made possible only by a careful observance of the laws of growth.

If you have a bud on your rose-bush that you want should blossom the last device you would think of resorting to would be to detach the bud from the stalk and to toss it into the air. And yet that is precisely what hosts of young men and young women are doing to-day who are questioning,—which is perfectly proper,—but who are nipping the fiber of connection that would unite what they do doubt with what they do not doubt, and so of course their doubts never become faith, cannot become faith. Buds of doubt do not blossom and become conviction when separated from the live stalk of assurance any more than rosebuds become rose blossoms when cut from the living stalk of the bush.

And when such people come and ask me or somebody else to solve their doubts for them,—I care nothing for their doubts; their convictions are all I

am interested in, and if they were equally interested in them they would get along well enough. And it makes very little difference how small their conviction is if only it is conviction, and if only they will stand to it and be true to it in their thought and in their life, make that conviction the basis of their thinking, the support of their inquiring and the law of their conduct.

The fault of almost all of us is in forgetting that the only way of entering into a wider range of knowledge, and in that way adding to our assurances, is to deal, in intellectual and moral fidelity, with that of which we are at present assured. For example: It is not assuming too much, I venture to think, to say that each one of us is convinced of the existence of a superior Power, and that we each of us find in ourselves an impulse inclining us to stand in an attitude of reverence towards that superior Power. We may or we may not conceive of that Power as endowed with all the qualities sometimes claimed for it. But we believe in the Power. We may ignore it in the sunshiny days of our experience, but in the exigencies of life our belief in it, our consciousness of it, comes back to us strong and distinct. Now, for any man, that is enough for a beginning if he will be true to that beginning. When Horace Bushnell was in college he lost his belief in God as God is usually understood. All that remained over to him from his previous conviction was a belief in the abstract principle of right. That was not much of a God, but it was something, and that something he held to. In-

stead of entangling himself in the intricacies of the darkened realm of mystery in which he could so easily have become enslaved and submerged, and thus his whole splendid career of Christian faith and service have been sacrificed, he simply held his ground inside the very small area of assurance remaining to him; instead of dissipating his religious energies by roaming aimlessly in a world where nothing offered to him a basis of firm support, he kept simply and unswervingly to his confidence in the abstract principle of right, and not simply kept to it, but knelt down and prayed to it. "A dreary prayer," he said it was, but it was a prayer; it was the best he could do, and it was honest, and, as he afterwards told the students at Yale, the God that he had lost came back to him in his act of trying faithfully and sincerely to worship the small fraction of God that had survived to him. He saved himself to himself and to the world by pursuing the same course as the man in our story and as the blind man with the recovered sight, placing all the prior emphasis on so much as he could sincerely accept, holding to it tenaciously, living in loyal obedience to the impulse of it, and letting larger belief in due time and in its own way flower out from that.

It is the habit of dwelling more constantly on what may seem to us mysterious and uncertain in regard to the meaning and character of Christ, than on those features of Him that are easy to understand and that we are able cordially to assent to, that is preventing people all around us from coming thoroughly and

restfully under the power of Christ. We may not be able to form a distinct conception of His import in all His wide relations both to God and man, but there is a degree of belief in Him that every man has who has any acquaintance at all with the record of the life He lived. We all of us believe in perfect holiness as He lived it. We all of us believe in perfect love as He exercised it.

So far we are on sure ground. We are where Bushnell was in assenting to the abstract principle of right. But are we following Bushnell's example still farther and absolutely committing ourselves to so much of Christ as we really assent to, and making holiness as He lived it *the* law of our conduct, and love as He exercised it *the* supreme impulse in all our relations with others? Never mind His relations to the Trinity. Never mind the reported story of His resurrection. Never mind how wide the encompassing sea of mystery, but build on your little island, which, after all, is a good deal of an island. Let what you do not believe in alone. You believe in Christ's holiness. Stand by that and let there be fostered in your heart the spirit of holiness. You believe in Christ's love; let there be fostered in your heart the spirit of a pure affection, animating you in all your dealings. That is an acceptance of Christ, and is enough for a beginning, and is as much as the first disciples were equal to at the outset. In other words, do not try to be accomplished theologians, but strive to be Christians in incarnating in your own character and life the personal truth and charm that were illus-

trated in the Christ. Do not try to bring the stars down out of the sky or to measure their breadth and altitude, but stand down quietly and adoringly under the soft, mellow light that it is their sweet ambition to shed upon you.

There is too much querying about what we do not know and too little acting on the basis of what we do know, becoming so bewildered by the unsearchableness of the sky as to go stumbling along over the plain road that is marked for us on the ground. There is no objection to astronomical research, but observatories are built on the earth, not in the air; and whether it be the secrets of the material or of the spiritual firmament that are the object of our quest the prime secret of discovery is sincerity, and the consecrated use of what we believe to-day is the sure stepping-stone to the larger and richer belief of to-morrow. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will *manifest Myself to him*."

XV

LIVING BY THE LAW OF A RENEWED HEART

"If ye are led by the Spirit ye are not under the law."—*Galatians 5 : 18.*

A MAN by thinking may clarify his mind: a man by thinking may confuse his mind: it all depends. Some problems are made difficult by the very intensity with which we apply our minds to their solution. It is an optical fact with which you are probably familiar that if you focus your eye upon a distant object any intervening object makes a double image of itself. Which is what I say, that looking too hard mystifies what is really close by and is not mysterious at all.

There is the same overworking of the mental and moral vision in matters of practical life. When we make hard work of knowing a thing that is easy to be known we cease to be able to know it, and form a misty conception of it that lifts it quite out of the range of our practical understanding. That is a habit that we are rather constantly practising, not so much in matters of material life, business and so on, as in affairs that are more personal. Instead of looking at them with an easy and frank eye, and letting them picture themselves to us in the simple shape that is natural to them, we crowd upon them a strained regard, confuse their real intention, miss the

import that we need to have them convey to us, and are kept in ignorance by the very desperateness of the attempt that we make to become wise.

To put the same thing in different words, we take a fact which, properly considered, is simple enough, put under it the stilts of a little laboured thinking, erect it by that process into a notion or, if you please, a philosophy, or, let us say, a theology, by which means it has wrung out of it just that juice of practical and felt reality that can alone render it relevant to common feeling and common living. For theology, as such, has little or no relation, working relation, to every-day life. It is like a herbarium, it is made up of the preserved flowers of religious thought, flowers that in a way keep their natural shape, but that have been pressed till the life in them has become extinct, and dried till the musty odour that survives in them is but a sepulchral reminiscence of their native perfume.

Theology is interesting and valuable; so are herbariums; but you do not decorate your dining table with dessicated roses, nor do you any longer beautify or influence your life by any simple face-to-face religious truth when once that truth has been relegated by you to the museum of doctrinal curiosities. And with all the service that theology has rendered, that is the harm that it has done, and that it is bound to do. It takes truth that is full of vital sap, dries it, embalms it and mummifies it, and mummies, whether of the human or other kind, are not influential members of society.

It is a very cheap sort of amusement to ridicule theology, and I am not doing it, but whether it is a matter of men or a matter of truths our study must be to get into contact with things that are alive, things that are realized by us to be pulsing with original vitality, and therefore capable of exercising over us a splendid imperialism, and drawing close to us with a warm inspirational touch. I am not here to defame the things that are embalmed, but to glorify those that still pulse and breathe. The great thing is life.

Such a truth is the one that speaks to us from out this verse of the Galatian Letter; speaks, that is to say, if we will let it speak: will put its imprint upon us and make a record of itself within us; if without any struggle or straining of mind we will let it tell its way into us, as the unresisting stars bend their orbits to the impulse of the sun, as the willing and unstriving flowers allow themselves to be tinted and pencilled by the sun.

"If ye be led of the Spirit ye are not under the law." The truth so uttered is an immense one, but there is nothing in the immensity of any truth to render us anxious or distrustful. The human mind and heart are purposely adjusted to the reception of great truths and formed into sympathy with them. Even the eye, small as it appears, is full of delicate and appreciative correspondence with all the lesser objects that compose the earth and all the vaster things that make up the sky and fill the firmament. It is a way God has of reminding us of the wealth of

our inheritance and the splendour of our possibilities, and of encouraging us to look with an unabashed heart into those yet higher regions thronged with the constellated lights of spiritual verity.

What the apostle has here written indicates to us in a way, simple enough to understand, the two kinds of control under the one or the other of which we are personally governed and at the behest of the one or the other of which our acts are being shaped and our lives moulded. This is not put forth by him out of philosophic interest in any mere theory of life. To him as to any man with a big heart and a burning purpose, theories as such, one and all of them, were mere rubbish. But to everything that was actual and that stood in actual relation to an actual soul he was keenly, yes, terrifically alive. Such actualities told upon him with the power of an immense inspiration and made his sentences hot with the fervour of a mind that was aglow, a heart that was aflame.

And the apostle is attempting here to fix the attention of the slow-hearted Galatians upon what he felt to be the great underlying and determinative fact of the new religion. Paul had had a tremendous experience. Experience is apocalyptic. His soul had been penetrated by the reality of the truth he was heralding. He knew because he had felt. He had come to a knowledge of what Christianity is, not by any process of scholarly studiousness, but had had his mind cleared and his heart heated in the glowing flame of a searching inward experience.

Light is not enough. It takes light and heat both to make the kind of sunbeams that are able both to brighten the earth and to fill the furrows with things of life, growth and blossom.

His preaching, therefore, was not a process of passing on to others what some one or other had passed on to him, but a process, rather, of uncovering to others the containings of his own thought and passion as those containings had been accumulated there, not by the traditions of men, but by the touch of God. In this I am not extemporizing a chapter of Pauline biography, but reproducing in my own words that which he has told us of himself, and told us indeed in the very letter from which our text is drawn.

Well Paul had been a Jew. It is a great thing to be a Jew if one can be a Jew of the Abrahamic or Mosaic type. Christians ought to be ashamed of themselves for all the shots of ridicule that they discharge upon that people that has done more than any other people in the way of laying the foundations of present civilization and present religion. Of course a Jew that is a Jew only in pretence is not a thing of beauty, but just as much so as a Christian that is only a Christian in pretence. Christianity is Judaism come to its flowering. The foundation stones of Christianity were all Jews. St. Paul was a Jew, and because he was a tremendous Jew was what made him capable of becoming a tremendous Christian.

The fundamental feature of St. Paul's character,—a feature that evinced itself just as distinctly prior to his conversion as after,—was his inflexible self-com-

mitment to authority. He learned what is the hardest lesson that any man ever has to learn, the lesson of obedience, the habit of following, without crook or crinkle, a line of duty that is not of one's own extemporizing. To use the expression he himself employs in our verse he was "under the law," well under it, clear under it, slavishly under it, and as we learn from his own pen it lay upon him as a kind of crushing incubus, from under which he felt like crying out as in the midst of a sort of moral nightmare. A magnificent hero, but as wretched as he was heroic. Tried to scream in the dark but his voice wouldn't come. A splendid subject for the divine visitation. Just the man to be overtaken by a great light, and to be reached by a divine voice.

In those days, as he tells us, it was his one particular and engrossing employment to do right, just as it is the one particular and engrossing employment of an elevated railway ticket-chopper to chop tickets, and Paul went about it in very much the same way that the chopper goes about it, and with just about the same degree of effervescent enthusiasm as he. He made the same discovery that hosts of men and women have made before and since who have taken up the work of doing right as a regular employment. There is no business that is more wearing; none where the employé feels greater need of short hours and frequent holidays.

Now the criticism requiring to be passed upon such a life is that while it is heroic, it is purely artificial. It is a made-up life. It is a manufactured

life, a life that is put together. Indeed it is not life, it is manufacture. Paul hated it while he was doing it and hated it worse after he had gotten past doing it. A free man may do the same kind of labour as a slave, but free labour is one thing, and slave labour is a distinct thing. It is one thing to work, and another thing to be worked. Paul was at that time a slave, a moral slave, an ethical serf. Liberty is something he says nothing about till later, not till the Great Emancipator had read to him a proclamation of emancipation.

St. James says that a man is justified by his works. I beg St. James' pardon, but a man is *not* justified by his works. Bad men may do good works and good men may do bad works. It is impossible to read across from one to the other. Propriety is not righteousness. Proprieties are quite often like labels which, though clean and stamped in gilded letters, may yet be pasted upon bottles that are filled with adulterated goods.

Christ says that a tree is known by its fruits. Certainly. That is because a tree cannot bear fruit differing in its nature from the nature of the tree, but a man can bear fruit differing in its nature from the nature of the man. I may act as though I loved and yet not love. I may behave as though I were pure and yet not be pure. St. Paul, who had an intensely searching eye for the unpretending actuality of things crowds all of this matter into a very compact lesson in that familiar love-chapter wherein he says,—"Though I bestow all my goods to feed

the poor and have not love it profiteth me nothing," —which is to say that on Christian ground a love-act denotes nothing except as it is the coming into deed of a love-spirit, and even then it is not the act that counts, but only the tender exuberance that lurks within, perfectly known only by him who feels it, perfectly visible only to the divine eye of Him who inspires it.

We that are Christians must be careful to keep on Christian ground. Superficiality is no ingredient of the religion of Jesus. To conform to a law that is a purely external affair, to be more virtuous in our act than we are in our thought and feeling, is sheer artifice, a form of moral mannerism, a specimen of whited sepulchre.

Men are not realizing the advance that Christianity makes over Judaism in this respect. Apparently considerable of what passes as Christliness is in fact nothing other than Mosaism fancifully baptized over a Christian font. What I mean is that we are a great many of us trying to be Christian by forcing our behaviour into conformity with lines drawn externally, statutes objectively legislated, moral highways outwardly engineered,—highways along which we make it our moral business to push our feet, but highways upon which we would not tread if it were safe to travel upon some other route that is more to our liking.

It was this artificial righteousness, this perspiring effort to grow moral flowers after the waxwork pattern that St. Paul is so strenuously deprecating in

the Galatian Letter. He had been engaged in that kind of floriculture for thirty years or so and had a gnawing understanding of what it meant. And it is out of that wearisome experience of moral captivity that springs the joy he finds in moral emancipation, and the sweet ferocity with which he makes war upon scheduled proprieties of every sort, Mosaic and all the rest. As I said a few minutes ago, it was just because he had so heroically grovelled under the enslaving stress of Mosaic captivity that he was prepared to enter intelligently and enthusiastically into the enjoyment of the splendid liberty wrought within him by the emancipation of his divine Deliverer.

And yet, at the same time, there is no condition of obedience so intense, no condition of submission to inflexible impulse so exacting,—so without margin of arbitrary choice,—as that into which a man is brought by the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free. Never, even in those times when he was most scrupulous in his observance of Mosaic statute, was St. Paul so thoroughly subject to governance as after he had gotten out from under statute; at no previous time could every movement of his hands, every thought and passion of his soul be anticipated and calculated with such absolute certainty; never so completely conformable to law as when he had learned to be unconscious that there was any such thing as law. The greater the freedom the more law, but law that is obeyed without any sense of law.

That ought not to impress any one peculiarly,

for even nature is full of it, and unrenewed man is the only creature in which that condition does not obtain. Everything else, of which we have any knowledge, works in spontaneous accord with the ordinances that are a part of its nature. The flower grows in strictest, most unvarying conformity to vegetable requirement, but in order to so doing has simply to act out its own impulses. There is on its part no striving after something which is not quite easy for it, not quite natural to it. The acorn has only to be itself, true to itself,—not true to some exterior ordinance violently imposed upon it,—has only to be true to itself and it will grow into an oak, no struggle, no perspiration, no trampling upon forbidden impulses. It is rigidly submissive to law, but to the law involved in its own constitution, so that it has no consciousness of law and no consciousness of being obedient to law. And that is what makes out the liberty of the vegetable world.

A far sublimer illustration, however, could be drawn from the Divine Being Himself. In nothing, in no one, is law present and assertive with such imperial urgency as in God. Not one deed that He performs, not a thought that He thinks, not a passion that He cherishes that is not punctiliously coincident with the line of what is eternally right. To no being is the moral law so relevant as to Him. Upon no being does it bind with such incorrigible tenacity as upon Him. And yet we may reverently say that He is never conscious of it as law and never conscious of being obedient to it as law. The ordinance

of perfect holiness is not separable from Himself: it is wrought into the fabric of His own nature. He has only to be Himself, therefore,—to act out His own nature,—and every requirement of righteousness has its fulfillment thereby absolutely assured.

Now throughout the entire range of existence, from God clear down to the acorn, man is the only being that we know of that dare not administer his life on that principle. Everything else can be what it is its natural impulse to be. Everybody else can do what it is his natural impulse to do. All other existences can be righteous without trying to be righteous. Nothing else feels the need of tying itself up to any requirements objectively imposed, to any statutes exteriorly laid down. Nothing else, the entire way from Jehovah down to the blossom and the bumblebee, has to be good with a goodness that is an artificial goodness, a pious affectation,—outward propriety, the false advertisement of adulterated goods in the interior.

Now, friends, we have reached a point of superb outlook where the whole range of Christian truth and intention,—the entire scheme of the Lord's work in the world,—lies laid out before us in all the sharp distinctness with which the underlying lowlands extend themselves beneath the eye of the observer on the top of Mont Blanc or the Matterhorn.

The purpose of Christianity is to take us out from our exceptional position and put us in the same class with Jehovah, the nightingale and the butterfly, where, without being other than our natural selves,

without doing anything but what it is our first and spontaneous impulse to do, we can at the same time have our every thought, act and passion formed upon lines of perfect holiness, absolute purity and love untainted.

That is the stint that Christianity sets for itself, so to recreate our inward nature into accord with the spirit of true holiness and love unfeigned, that it will be as instinctive with us to do justice and work righteousness as it is for the linnet to sing and the bud to blossom, as instinctive with us to enwrap human hearts in the warm atmosphere of an impulsive affection,—that is like the love of God,—as it is instinctive with the sun to bathe all objects of the material world in the sweet fervour of its irresistible shining.

Too many of us are missing the very point of the religion of Jesus. It is not meant that we should try to do right, that we should try to be elevated in our thoughts, that we should try to be sweet and generous in our words and dealings. The pomegranate does not have to try to bear pomegranates; the earth does not need to take pains to keep from falling out of its orbit around the sun: every day the waves of the sea twinkle up to the sky, and every night the stars twinkle down to the waves of the sea without ever having to strive to twinkle. It is only the things that are spontaneous that are really beautiful. Everything that is not spontaneous is an affectation.

When the pianist finds that he cannot draw sweet

music from his instrument because the wires have become jangled and have fallen into dissonance, it never occurs to him to try to correct the inharmony by an extra expenditure of fist-power at the key-board. He arranges with some one to come and make the strings themselves harmonious, and when the instrument is musical, when the instrument is itself full of song, then that which it discourses will be songful.

That, then, is the aim of Jesus and His religion, to make us interiorly songful; not to crowd us into doing what it is not impulsive with us to do, but to lift us into a new nature whose instincts shall be themselves replete with sweet tunefulness,—a new heart that shall throb in unison with God's impulse, so that everything true and sweet shall be made easy and natural to us and all words that are kind, and deeds that are just, and thoughts that are pure be as blossoms that spring lightly and fragrantly out of the stalk of a beautified and glorified affection.

Now that is a Gospel that is worth preaching. That is a conception of Christianity that exhibits it in its sweetness, in its power, in its unutterable significance. It is a Christianity that abolishes life's moral drudgery. It brims with emancipation. It delivers me from enslavement and ethical chalk-lines. It makes it easy for me to be noble in my purposes, for it makes *me* noble. It makes it easy for me to be pure in my thoughts, for it makes *me* pure. It makes it easy for me to be warm and generous in my love, for it makes *me* tender and loving. It

creates within me a clean heart and renews within me a right spirit. It does not take me out of the region of law, but empowers me to live by the law of a renewed mind, practically makes a back number of the Decalogue and of every other formulated requirement; swings me back into harmony with the mind of God and into sympathy with the eternal constitution of things; takes me out of the category of the exceptional, and classes me with Jehovah, the shining stars and the songful nightingale that sings, not at the tick of a metronome, but warbles out of the sweet exuberance of its own irrepressible song-nature.

Create in us clean hearts, O God, and renew within us right spirits. Make *us* clean and our lives will be clean. Only make *us* righteous and our dealings will be just. Only make our hearts warm and sweet and tender, and all their outflow will be, must be, like Thy love, O Thou God of the tender heart and infinite compassion.

XVI

THE ETERNAL INHERENT IN THE PRESENT

"In My Father's house are many mansions."—*John 14: 2.*

THIS is a part of the "Father's house," and down here are some of the "mansions." Dealing in a manner of careless familiarity with the great truths contained in our Christian faith, and with the vast prospects opened to us by that faith, will certainly mar the beauty of those truths and impair the power and fascination of those prospects. But I am more afraid of the chilly reserve with which we regard the holy possibilities of the soul, and the untraversed area of its sweet but splendid destinies, than I am of any excess of familiarity with which we may approach them and make them the subject of pleasant thought and free discourse.

The thought that deserves and requires to be diligently inquired into is whether some of the soul's larger interests are not treated by us as though they were inaccessible, so out of range with terrestrial living that practically they are thereby put out of range of all such living, and the blessing thereby lost which was divinely designed to be stamped upon present human experience.

It is a pleasant thing to realize that there is among men of deepest thoughtfulness a reaction against the

hard and the sterile philosophy of such men as Spencer, Hamilton and Mansel, a disposition if not to perforate the stubborn walls of their material philosophy, at any rate to plume the wings of thought and research for flight over and outside such walls, to deny to sense the monopoly of discovery and to credit the soul, the enlightened, quickened and baptized soul, with a gift for discovery, and for appreciating with warm and triumphant intensity, the existence of some things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard.

Even though some of these matters be of a kind such that we are not able to portray them in definite lines, yet it is frequently the case, even in the world of nature, that the soul receives a peculiar impress and impulse from the presence of objects so dimly defined that the eye can only see *that* they are without being able to tell *what* they are. I should say that the most spirit-penetrating features of natural scenery are often those which give mystic suggestions of themselves at the point where they begin to fade into invisibility, " clad in dim aerial distance," as the poet has said,—Wordsworth, I think.

So in celestial scenery the most solemnly impressive thing is the " Milky Way," that semi-illuminated cloud of mystic beauty and hesitant sublimity, which puts its touch of velvety light upon the eye only with sufficient distinctness to enter through the eye into the soul and to start there a movement that is less a thought than it is a feeling and a presentiment. Such objects fulfill their superb function in that they

beckon us, they keep the mind alert, the thought lifted, the heart impassioned, and the expectation vivid. It is the only attitude of mind and heart that is promotive of either the richest experience, the largest growth, or the finest service.

Such are the people always that *lead* the people. Kings and emperors may rule the nations, but the prophets rule the world, and the prophet is the man whose vision is never stopped by the frontier that closes around the eye of the commonplace ones, but that perforates walls, leaps barriers, goes out on tremulous lines of holy inquiry and sees whither the world is moving and where the soul is going before the soul arrives and before the world achieves its destination.

That is a wonderful scene that is described in the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Acts, a scene wonderful not more for what it describes than for what lies outside its line of description. And that, let me say in passing, is almost the best part of the service that the Bible, when properly read, can render us, that, so to speak, it keeps the soul on tiptoe, gives us words that go beyond what the words themselves say,—steel rods, all of them, that are like bits of metal that stand up into the electrified air and that are crowned with a tremulous tongue of electric fire when the storm is on.

I refer to that passage in the itinerating life of St. Paul when having come up to Troas, situated on the Dardanelles, the dividing waters between Asia and Europe, there appeared to him, in a vision of the

night, a man of Macedonia,—a region of Europe lying on the European side of the Dardanelles,—a man who prayed him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." Which I suppose is but a graphic way that Scripture has of saying that St. Paul, standing back there on old Asiatic ground, was able with prophetic sense, to feel the regions that lay across and beyond; that in the exercise of an inspired insight or foresight,—for the two amount to the same thing,—he was able to behold the lands lying across the sea, to send his great apostolic thought along the highways of Europe which he had never trodden, and to see and intensely to feel the needs of the great continent of the Europe that was to be, thrown up into the sky in a kind of spiritual mirage, as vessels lying far away at sea, and islands scattered beyond the horizon are sometimes in certain conditions of the atmosphere, projected in plain figure before the eye of the spectator viewing them from afar.

There is something that is to me immensely thrilling in that ability to get into felt touch with things that transcend the reach of the ordinary sense, to feel the invisible in the midst of the visible, to have things that do not speak made spiritually audible, and thus to have a world that is too fine to be mapped become a part of the geography legible to any soul that is too much of a soul to be contented to limit itself to the short and dusty roads that thread the coarser territory of commonplace living.

It is no thought of mine that we should ignore the responsible relation we sustain to things that lie out

in easy view of the natural eye, or that are immediately and definitely audible to the physical ear. But a man cannot have his eye bandaged by the things that are close by, nor his heart immersed in life's frivolities, nor his soul bound under the fetters of fleshly experience and still be a soul that makes life a thing of vivid experience or that frescoes the walls of the future with lines and colours of splendid destiny. The soul, like the plant, must be uncovered to the airs that blow across it from the distances, and bared to the baptism of the unfathomed sky by which it is overarched. The great world of spirit is nowhere if it is not here. The world of the blessed is not framed in walls. The beginnings of heaven are in the heavenly mind. This is part of the Father's house and here are some of the mansions.

Having referred to some of the lesser blessings by which life is enriched the poet goes on to say:—

"Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those first affections
Those shadowy recollections,
Which be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain life of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us—cherish—and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence; truths that wake,
To perish never:
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor man nor boy
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!

Hence in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither;
Can in a moment travel thither, —
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

My thought is that we push the world of hidden realities so far from us that they become unreal; that in that way we practically resent the blessings which those realities are seeking to lay upon our souls as an invisible crown; that we think about what we call the heavenly world and the eternal world with thoughts that are stilted and unnatural; that the things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard are so dislocated from the world which we inhabit physically as to form a realm by itself and a realm so unsympathetic with this one as to stand towards it as an enemy rather than a friend; that we conjugate heaven in the future tense and think of eternity as something that is going to be and, perhaps, sometimes as something that has been, but never as something that *is*.

By calling all of this "the other world" we so wall it off from the realm of present experience as to destroy it as a source of present effects. It is not so certain that there is any "other world," any world, I mean, that is not contained in the general world we are in now, and that we already know something about. We spoil heaven, it seems to me, by so crowding it out of the present moment, so locating it in some impossible universe unrelated to our own,

and so painting it in colours foreign to the tints of the known life (and that have to be manufactured for the purpose), that it comes to mean absolutely nothing to us. It becomes a kind of bubble hung in the sun, which is piously spread all over with external iridescence to compensate for its interior vacuity.

This conception of things has in part, doubtless, sprung from the very finest and most reverent of intentions. Things as we know them here are in a great many respects bad, so that the impatient mind quite naturally goes to work to construct what it calls its heaven by leaving out of it all of the contents of present life and experience; and as it knows and can know, of nothing else but what present life and experience furnish, what such mind constructs can, of course, be only so much artificial vacancy with no furnishings to break the monotony of the emptiness, merely an imaginary apartment adorned with bare walls that are likewise imaginary,—a negative kind of hell, only less interesting.

Now it concerns us to remember that celestial scenery, so far as it is painted for us in the Scriptures, is done in colours taken from the palette of present life. It is not so important that we construe such portraiture literally, as that we recognize the underlying idea of an identity between what we call our terrestrial and our celestial experience, and that what we in our moments of strained piety call "the other world" is less another world than it is this world with all that is fine, true and sweet in it, carried forward to richer forms of unfolding.

That gives us something to rest in and puts us upon ground that is already flowery, even though with an intermixture of weeds at present, and sets us down in view of a prospect that is intelligible because filled with foliage that is interpretable in terms of present scenery.

Now just as the perfect Christian is the coming to flower and to incipient fruitage of all those elements which are best in the heart of every man, so the beautiful world we sometimes call heaven is to be thought of by us as the preservation and the carrying on to a more and more beauteous and luxuriant stage of expansion whatever is truest, noblest and sweetest in human life and human relations as we know them to-day. So that if we will make an inventory of the choicest traits of human character and the choicest features of human life and activity as we are to-day familiar with them in our personal experience and mutual relations, we then have the means wherewith in our thought we can furnish and decorate that invisible territory of being into which it is the privilege of those who are moulded after the spiritual stature of Christ more and more deeply to enter.

But the beginnings of all that are lodged in the present moment. Let us not think of any break. The course of life, life of the plant, the animal, the soul, is maintained along lines of uninterrupted continuity. To-day is born from the womb of yesterday, and to-morrow will be the offspring of to-day. There is nothing in Scripture or in nature to sustain the supposition that the highway of our life once be-

gun is gashed with any abyss of meaningless suspension, that threads are broken and have to be knotted together again, and that the little territory we know as our present life is islanded from all that great continent of being that fills to the full the area of the eternal to-morrow.

It is all one great and indivisible matter. That is my point. The soul's celestial life is not distinct from its terrestrial life save in the sense in which the blossom is distinct from the bud. As I interpret Scripture and the demands of our own hearts, we are never to be shaken from present soil, never to be rooted out from those beginnings of spiritual life in which we are already planted and secured.

Heaven is not to be thought of by us as an outbreak upon us of spiritual splendour unspeakable and altogether new, either here or elsewhere, but a kind of dawning-day experience, begun back in the unillumined hours of our infancy and promising, if we will, to be carried onward through this present chapter of our being and on and on through the ever brightening pages of a volume that is without finis; rooted forever in the same ground, but carried up along successive levels of light and breadth in an eternal progress towards the frontiers of an illimitable sky. So that we are there now. We are in heaven to-day to the extent that heaven is in us, to the extent that we are charged with that love for what is true and that passion for whatever is sweet and holy in truth and in person that composed the genius of our Lord and that enters to constitute the being of

the Everlasting Father. So that this is part of the Father's house and here are some of the mansions.

In this view of things which seems to me so to simplify and to beautify the whole situation and to open before us the superb prospect upon the hither edge of which we do, if we will, already stand,—in this view of things, as I indicated a moment ago, we find our support not only in the terms of Scripture but also in the demands of our heart.

I am of those who find truth in the burning desires and impassioned longings of hearts that are lifted high above the low level of sordid interest. A great open eye viewing the world from the mountain top of spiritual outlook, will see more truthfully and reach with its vision through a longer vista of discovery than all the exquisitely finished and delicately polished microscopes in the world manipulated down in the valley by expert and plodding microscopists. There is more of divine revelation, more of profound glance into the eternal unknown in one poet, sunkissed and God-thrilled, than in all the quizzical philosophers from Aristotle down to Herbert Spencer,—in one poet, be it Plato, Isaiah, Wordsworth, Tennyson. A warm passion gets farther into the heights than ever a cold thought can do.

Granting all that can be said about the necessary restraints and correctives furnished by perspiring ratiocination, the heart is the soul's eye and gifted with a power of penetration by the side of which mere dialectics is blind and clumsy helplessness. As sunrise upon past hours of darkness, as beacon-light

guiding over gloomy waters to the distant shores beyond, one page of Maurice sheds a larger, whiter beam than the whole astute library put before the world by the author of "The Principles of Psychology."

It is the heart that is the organ of prophecy. Love is knowledge. Says Blackie, "You know no man till you have looked with the eye of a brother into the best that is in him." "Eye of a brother"! The insight of love; heart intuition; high passion the soul's Columbus of discovery. St. John says the same thing in the first Epistle and teaches us that the very substance of God is penetrable by the vision of a loving heart.

So I say again, I am of those who trust the apocalyptic disclosures made by the heart in its fine, in its superb moments; my faith in the great things that are unseen, whether invisibly present in us and among us, or postponed to the larger days to come, my faith in these things I am ready now and always to pin upon the declaration of God's Word sustained and endorsed by the passionate longings and the tremulous presentiments of my soul in its moments of pure sincerity and grand uplift. God give to us men that will pick themselves up from the valley and gather themselves into the high places, with a vision in their eye and prophecy upon their lip.

And now it is the felt overshadowing of the things that are unseen, the realized presence even here of powers, forces, personalities even, that the swift little days we are now living in become great and an enno-

bled part of the reach of years stretching from everlasting to everlasting. This earth of ours that to us living upon it seems so large and important is a mere paltry drop till it is conceived by us as livingly bound in with that whole illimitable universe centered in the throne of God. Then, so conceived, every star in the firmament puts upon this little separate globe its benediction of nobility and baptizes with the wealth of its own immensity the little earth itself and every mountain pile upon it that lifts itself skyward, every forest that stands out under the touch of the sun by day and that points towards the drifting constellations by night.

And it is the like of that that enriches with its true meaning the days through which we live and the lives that we live in them. This is part of God's house and here are some of the mansions. To-day is holy. To-day throbs with the beat of the eternal pulse. We are not islanded: we are this moment part, indissoluble part, of the vast continent that fills the whole area reaching all the way from the sunrise to the sunsetting of eternity. Heaven is everywhere where there is a heavenly spirit. There are no barriers except those which we imaginatively erect. It is all gateway, open lot, the grave along with the rest, and the casket a cradle rocked in the same beauteous home, but in another of its mansions.

And we want to live, you and I, at that spiritual altitude, and out in that white breezy atmosphere, where all of this shall lie out before us in tender, gracious simplicity, where we shall feel our oneness

with all that has been and that shall be, and our closeness to all that anywhere in the kingdom of God and of His Christ exists, lives, loves.

And the impulse to the line of thought followed this morning was in part communicated to me by a conversation that I once had with a lady who years before had lost her beloved husband. The relation between her and him had been emphatically a union of souls, one wherein the physical element had been very, very secondary. And yet when the hour of his dissolution arrived and all that had been the visible expression of his personality, and all through which the tenderness of his devotion had sweetly disclosed itself had been laid beneath the sod, the more material side of her nature at first asserted itself and for many days it remained the persistent and despairing passion of her heart to tarry by his graveside and to seek comfort and to find a kind of companionship in clinging as it were to the silent and hidden memorials of a life that was done, of a spirit that was fled.

It was all very natural, for the human soul is a clinging thing, and never so much so as in its hours of bereavement; but it was all very sad and very hopeless, for a heart that is shaken in its sorrow can find quietness and repose only in the touch of some strong thing that induces a sense of the unchangeable and the real; and in that cold form that lay under the ground, and in that pallid face that was slowly creeping back to original dust there was no symptom, no suggestion of anything so inwrought with the energy of the abiding and the eternal that the dear

lonely one could cast her weeping spirit upon it for sweet assuagement.

But when the natural and physical impulse of the lady who told me her story had had its innings, with that deep insight into things which springs from sweet sincerity, looking again upon the grave she suddenly said to herself,—"The thing that lies there rotting isn't my husband. His spirit and his love do not belong to the realm of decay. Soul lives: love is one of the eternals." And right there in the midst of an acre dedicated to corruption she gathered herself up from the morbid debility of despair, forsook the grave, bade a permanent good-bye to putrifaction, and in the sweet and chastened vigour of a nature to which a new revelation had come, flung herself out upon the support of the great Love, which is only another name for the heavenly Father, respired somewhat of the breath, forever untainted, which makes up the atmosphere of heaven, detected in it the presence of the dear soul she had not lost, found in it all that upon which she could stand in sweet quietness and absolute assurance, and went on into the years brightened and warmed by an experience of the things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard.

Faithful friends, it lies, I know
Pale, and white, and cold as snow;
And ye say: "Abdallah's dead"—
Weeping at the feet and head.
I can see your falling tears;
I can hear your sighs and prayers;

Yet I smile and whisper this:
I am not the thing you kiss!
Cease your tears and let it lie,—
It was mine, it is not I.

Sweet friends! what the women lave
For the last sleep of the grave
Is a hut which I am quitting,—
Is a garment no more fitting,—
Is a cage from which, at last,
Like a bird my soul has passed.
Love the inmate, not the room;
The weaver, not the garb,—the plume
Of the eagle, not the bars
That kept him from the splendid stars!

Loving friends, oh rise and dry
Straightway every weeping eye!
What ye lift upon the bier
Is not worth a single tear.
'Tis an empty sea-shell—one
Out of which the pearl is gone.
The shell is broken, it lies there;
The pearl, the All, the Soul, is here.
'Tis an earthern jar whose lid
Allah sealed, the while it hid
That treasure of his treasury—
A mind that loved him; let it lie.
Let the shards be earth once more,
Since the gold is in his store.

Allah glorious! Allah good!
Now thy world is understood—
Now the long, long wonder ends;
Yet ye weep, my foolish friends,
While the man whom you call dead,
In unbroken bliss instead,
Lives and loves you,—lost, 'tis true,
In the light that shines for you.

But in the light you cannot see,
In undisturbed felicity—
In a perfect Paradise,
And a life that never dies.

Farewell! friends—yet not farewell;
Where I go you, too, shall dwell.
I am gone before your face—
A moment's worth, a little space.
When you come where I have stept
Ye will wonder why ye wept;
Ye will know by true love taught
That here is all, and there is naught.

There are many things which pass away: there are some things which abide. There is putridity, but there is life. There is body, but there is spirit. There is the ground which is full of dark decay, but there are the heavens which are always white and sweet. There are the things which come with the rising of the sun but vanish with its setting. There is the grass that withereth but there is the righteousness that standeth firm on the throne of God. There is the flower that fadeth, but there is the love that never faileth. And we want more and more to learn that the strength of our life, the power, beauty and sweet expectation of it are always according to the depth with which we are anchored into the things which are unseen and eternal. This is part of the Father's house and here are some of the mansions.

XVII

A GROWING SOUL IN A WIDENING WORLD

"And she called his name Moses."—*Exodus 2 : 10.*

A VEGETABLE seed, though planted under ground, is endowed with an instinct that points its way towards the sky. It may never get there. It may rot in the soil. But a skyward instinct is in it. Its tendency is to grow, and to grow *up*.

Now the impulse planted in the seed is planted in the soul. It is tipped with a heavenward yearning,—whatever the thought that you may choose to associate with the word "heavenward." It is tipped with a heavenward yearning. It may never get there. It may rot in the soil; but the yearning is in it. Its tendency is to grow, and to grow *up*.

That is why when the great things of the world, the high and fine things, are brought near enough to the soul to touch it, response comes, perhaps very faintly, almost imperceptibly; but the soul feels the touch and makes at least a little show of feeling it, and, it may be, a great deal more than a little.

I am sure that that is the fault with us preachers sometimes, that we become engrossed with our own badness and that of other people, and forget to take account of that implanted nerve that is constructed to quiver at a touch that is gentle and sympathetic,—

of that implanted cord that knows how to vibrate only when clear and sweet music is played upon it. When our Lord talked with the woman by the well of Samaria, although evidently not oblivious of her questionable character, He acted as one who recognized that it was only the finer portals of the human spirit that are open to the finer approaches, and that saving access to the soul can be gained only by contact with it at the point where it lives, not at the point where it is dead,—at the point of its celestial affinities, not in the region where brood its kinships with what is frail and unclean.

We dwelt last Sabbath morning upon what, in lieu of a better name, we called man's greatness, considering it only in a general way, without recourse to any of that concreteness of illustration that might be expected to bring the matter a little more squarely upon our understanding and heart. We tried to show that whatever faculty of effect there is in us that deserves to be called greatness, or even the beginnings of greatness, is due to some power that is exercised over us, and due to our having submitted ourselves to the sweep of that power, whether emanating from some truth that has fastened itself upon us, or from some personal being, human or divine, that has thrown about us the arms of his girding influence. It is pleasant to the human spirit to be reminded that to be great,—or at least a little so,—is what we are all made for; that just as the smallest kind of landed estate or little farm has full right of way on up into the sunshine and through the over-

hanging spaces till it strikes plump against the stars,—however solid the walls that encompass it or however contracted and meagre the fences that bar out its neighbour's corn,—that so these souls of ours, however confining their natural limitations, are candidates for as large a section of the overlying and abounding universe as they are disposed to fill and will go about in the right way to fill.

And this instinct towards larger living—which is something like the impulse that sets the unhatched bird to pecking its way out into a wider world—this instinct is what is putting on each of us its quiet but steady pressure all the time, if only we understood better what it intends by its pressure that we should do and how we should do it. It keeps us everlastingly a-going, but not always to much purpose. We have a natural, and I would go farther and say, a holy impulse, to occupy a larger and larger place, and to play a more and more important rôle, and we plunge out in all directions in order to do it, not realizing very much more clearly than the chick—it may be—what this plunging of ours means and what we hope to gain by it.

This that we call human ambition may have exceedingly bad ingredients mixed with it, but it is what creates a future for a man, even as its vegetable or animal counterpart creates a future for the seed that is trying to germinate, or for the small thing in the egg that knocks at the inside of its own door for admission into the open.

One who knows how insignificant he is, but who

at the same time, realizes that he has not exactly any right to be insignificant, and that he is somehow called to a wider estate, undertakes to meet that call by one or another of a good many varieties of accumulation, contriving more or less successfully to feel that his own personal enlargement is effected by virtue of such accumulation—it may be learning, it may be money, it may be houses, lands, clothes, retinue of followers, no matter what. He may not be himself any larger for it, but it gives him a *sense* of largeness, and largeness is what we want, and we cannot help wanting it, and we ought to have some of it, and we were made to have some of it: and if one hasn't it it helps to keep a small center comfortable by seeing itself decorated by a large circumference. A person who is in himself utterly insignificant will, if standing at the vestibule of his own elegant mansion, consciously dilate to the architectural proportions of the mansion. A woman may be a mere iridescent bubble of feminine vacuity, and yet, standing forth in the exploitation of her millineried elegance and decorative bijoutry, she consciously or unconsciously pads her personality with her laces and her gems and feels that somehow she is a jewel *because* of her jewels.

There is, of course, a very distinguished element of silliness about it, but that is not why I refer to it. There is also in it a symptom of that irrepressible tendency which is part of our original equipment, to get out somewhere, somehow to be something and to be it more and more, to work out as the unhatched

bird does, to work up as it is the law of the oak to do, and of the pansy. The mistake here, as so often, is not in our ambition, but in not understanding our ambition, and therefore in not knowing how to compass our ambition. Migratory birds never fail of finding the region towards which they wing their flight. We do, and often fly a whole year and perhaps a whole lifetime, to find at the end that we have been only flying round and round and have not gotten anywhere.

Recognizing, therefore, the fact that the ambition to be great—at least a little so—is not only a universal ambition, but also a commendable one, and one ineradicably rooted in our nature—as much so as it belongs to a flower to outgrow the bud and become a blossom—it seemed to me good to take the man whose name is prefixed to this discourse—a man whose greatness is universally recognized—and discover, as far as we can, what in his case appear to be the elements of greatness, to discover by the light of his example what it is that constitutes the science and art of greatness, the lines which, faithfully pursued, give reasonable assurance of results similar to his, even if not the equivalent of his.

For while we might not be justified in claiming that all men are made equal by dowry of birth, yet it is rather apparent that what God gives us by nature has not much more to do in determining the issues of our life than the *use we make* of what is ours by nature and such shaping of circumstances and opportunity as will invite to a remunerative

investment of our natural resources of thought, passion and purpose: just as two countries may be equally rich in mineral deposits of iron, coal or silver, and one country become rich by the opening up of its mines, and the other remain poor from having, perhaps accidentally, failed to discover them, or, perhaps indolently, neglected to work them.

There are said to be "mute, inglorious Miltons," and there may have been many a Moses, but who never wrote a decalogue, never emancipated a people, and of whom the world has never heard, for the simple reason that he never really heard of himself, and never passed under the dominion of those constraints, and under the baptism of those eminent influences which can alone qualify for high and large workmanship.

We go on then to specify two or three influences that wrought mightily in the heart and life of this old prophet of God,—influences such that by their conjunction in one man could not by any possibility issue in anything other than nobility of character and grandeur of service.

In the first place Moses had a consciousness of being divinely called: he had a sense of being God's deputy. That is definitely stated in the record, and, as we are told, he was so saturated with the thought that he could not understand why his brethren should not regard him in the same light and impute to him the same character of lieutenancy. We are not told, I believe, that until a later date he heard any voice that summoned him to the enterprise of

Hebrew emancipation, nor that he had any abrupt manifestation made to him that tended to introduce him to that career of difficult and rugged effort.

But not only was he one who afterwards worked with an active hand, but he was one always who thought with a brooding mind. He incubated his purposes. A prelude of forty years preceded the first overt act of his life-mission. Between the lines of the written story we read that during that period which was more than a generation in length, the entire situation was uncovering itself to him and coming into intelligible relation with his understanding and into affectionate relation with his heart. The atmosphere was certainly clearing before him. Objects that had lain back in obscurity were one by one standing out before him in definite outline. The fruit was ripening upon the stalk of devout intention and was not to be plucked until the day of its mellowing. This reminds us of the long route of thirty years which Jesus traversed on the way to His ministry. It all teaches us, singularly enough, that to be tremendously grasped and pinioned by a situation is prerequisite to being able to handle the situation; that we cannot master it till we have been mastered by it.

And in that clearing of the air He felt the descent upon Him of light that was supernal. Once the fog is cut, the earthly light and the heavenly light melt into each other, and the glory, all the way up and down, becomes a celestial glory; and the work that it becomes transparently evident to us is work that

must be done, and work too towards which all the faculties of our soul move out in unanimous response, such work, such opportunity, appeals to us with the authority of a divine ordainment, and we think we hear the voice of God in it: and we do: that is the way His voice comes. God's thoughts enter us through the avenue of our own thoughtfulness.

It would be impossible to tell how many of those communications, reported in the Old Testament as being spoken by the audible voice of God, are really to be interpreted as being only a ray of light from beyond, that gently and silently enters in among the twilight uncertainties of our own mind and creates there so much daylight that we know it must have been borne in from beyond the horizon.

Such, we gather from the narrative, had been the experience of this hero of Hebrew emancipation. And his heart was made large and he was himself made great by the realization of the divine dignity of his office. He felt, in a way, that he was God Himself localized at a particular spot, humanized for the accomplishment of a particular purpose. God would emancipate the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery, and, as it were, incarnated Himself in Moses with that end in view, and Moses felt the incarnation. And such sense of divine authorization roused into wakefulness all the possibilities of wisdom and passion that had been latently slumbering in his own bosom, and the heroic work he did blossomed out of the heroic faith he had in the dignity of his calling, the divineness of his mission.

That then is one way to become great. That is a part of the science of human largeness. All of which does something towards making us conclude that the distinguished prophets and apostles of early and later times were not made prophets and apostles because they were great, but became great because they were prophets and apostles, widened and heightened by the sense of carrying God's load and being *His* appointees to a responsible embassadorship. And one dimension of human greatness will always be lacking to the man or the woman who is not doing *something* in life, who is not engaged in *some* enterprise, with the full consciousness of working as God's vice-regent.

And then, in the second place, Moses was made great by the very vastness of his hopes and purposes. Man grows to the width of his intentions, dwindles to the contractedness of his intentions. God starts a man but the man will have to finish himself out. The size, the volume, of his purpose is the bread that nourishes in his soul the faculty of accomplishment. It is remarkable that one of the natural and conspicuous characteristics of this Moses was his lack of assurance. Later on in his life we see him retreating before the pursuit of his own undertaking. He staggered at the beginning under the weight of the responsibility that he was about to assume. At that point in his history he was *not* great and sank under the burden of his own conscious diminutiveness. But the burden that crushed him saved him. What pulverized him magnified him.

It is true he was already learned, so we are told, in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and we should be careful not to underemphasize a certain relation in which all that equipment stood to subsequent years of immense activity. But it is not in learning to make a man great a whit more than it is in money to make a man great. Scholarship, if that is all, is as likely to dry a man as to irrigate him. There are human soils, as there are agricultural soils, that are impoverished by cultivation. No amount of lumber will become bonfire except by the application of some kind of lighted match. It was not the mere going to college in Hieropolis, or wherever it may have been, but his university course, his post-graduate course, of vast undertaking and wide-reaching responsibility, that has lifted him up into the fellowship of the giant men and giant workers of the world.

And the force of this truth is by no means vitiated by the fact that only now and then in the world's history can a man be the liberator of a race, a Moses among the Hebrews, a Lincoln among the negroes, a Booker Washington among the freedmen. Such retaliation is only to miss the deepest and truest part of the entire matter. Just as it is true that wherever on this round earth we stand, we stand directly beneath a whole skyful of stars, so wherever in time or history we stand, we stand directly beneath a whole skyful of tremendous opportunity. Things are not obliged to be far away and inaccessible in order to be great. The word "universe" probably pictures to our imagination something that is out of reach, high

up in the sky, off among the Pleiades or somewhere; it is no more universe out there than it is here on Madison Avenue, or in your little seven by nine lodging-room.

The vast interests of mankind are everywhere; the great things of the kingdom of God are everywhere; the sky comes clear down to the ground. Circumstances may not enable you to take hold of a great deal, but if you take hold of a little of it you get the pull of the whole thing. You need not travel clear around the Atlantic in order to learn to know what tide means. Push your boat five feet from the beach when the moon is shovelling in the waters and you will get as much of the saturating lesson as though you were in mid-ocean.

It is all a question of the focus you give to your mental eye. A man, a workman, may be busied bevelling a block of granite, and while about it he may be either merely pounding stone or he may be constructing a cathedral: with one focus he is shrinking into a machine, with the other he is widening towards the stature of the building that his thought and heart are given to. You can teach a poor little coloured girl her letters, and it is for you to decide whether you will do it as a matter of schoolroom drudgery and become in the process a sort of educational pack-horse, or whether you will realize that in your service to the poor clouded thing you are opening the eyes of the blind, letting day into a midnight soul, and not only that, but touching at a minute point the whole terrific conundrum of the coloured race, and so deal-

ing with the severest problem that we are confronting in our national life. You can look out from your room into the heavens and see a bird flying high in the sky, or, contemplating that bird with a languid vision and a shortened focus, it will seem to you merely a sluggish fly lazily creeping across the window-pane. Great things are all in sight if only you will see them in their greatness, and when you see them *in* their greatness the vastness of their proportions works itself over into personal enlargement of your own.

Jesus Christ worked only through a little strip of land on the easterly end of the Mediterranean, but in His dealing with its people His consciousness was of the entire race of mankind. In opening the sealed eye it was the blindness of the world that He was addressing Himself to. In speaking words of comfort to the mourner it was the universal heartache that was loaded upon His sympathies. What was in the track of His vision was not the crawling insect on the window-pane, but the high-flying eagle; tenderly touching and caressing the little child, but loving it with a love that embraced not only the little one in His arms, but that embraced all the little ones in the arms of all the mothers. And so in all ways He was close to the majesty of event, and His thoughts and passions wove themselves in with the vast dimensions of the situation, and He was made large by the width of the world that He felt to be about Him, and the hugeness and infinite reach of all the interests by which that teeming world was populated.

And now, friends, without adding more, that is seriously and beauteously practical. There are hosts in our community, and it may be that there are some with us here who, whatever may have been the gifts with which they were by nature endowed, are like seeds in the ground that are seeds still and never have vegetated,—men and women physically prepossessing, physically attractive, winning in their ways, pleasant to have around, something as it is pleasant to have our rooms decorated with flowers; always busy, perhaps, but never exactly doing anything; worn very likely to the point of prostration, but with no results in sight that can be urged in justification of nervous expenditure; adult in years, but still infantile: full of the beginnings of growth, but void of continuings: lives that do not get beyond the point of doing chores: lives that flutter, but that do not fly: to whom deeds, as they every day do them, are like jumbled letters of the alphabet that spell out no particular meaning: deeds that are like grains of sand which only tumble over one another, lie where the wind happens to put them, and never organize into anything more substantial than an incalculable accident: deeds that are not a part of history, and that are therefore unflavoured by the great meanings of broad times and large event, and which, therefore, because dissociated from everything which has wide import, cannot tell back in import and enlargement upon those who do them.

Now that is why we have so many pretty infants of both sexes that are from twenty to forty years old.

It is not the fault of their make-up, it is not the fault of the work they have to do—the deep valley lies just as directly beneath the stars as does the high mountain—it is because they fail to realize their own life in its organized relation to the whole of life; it is because they look upon their line of every-day service as something separate, and not wrought into the totality of service; their deeds are felt by them as distinct threads and not as inwoven into the whole fabric and pattern of the web. They stay by the detail, therefore, and shrivel, instead of feeling the great whole to be represented in the detail, and thus using the detail merely as point of contact with the great whole, and winning that baptism of enlargement that it is the function of the great whole always to administer.

Thus, though standing clear away up at the head of the frith, it is given to us to recognize in the lapping waves on the far inland shore the prolongation of the tide that sets in from the heart of the sea. That makes great living, makes great men and women, whatever their work. It makes every deed you do to be felt by you as a part of world-history; it makes every solid service you render to be felt by you as a part of the platform that is permanently to sustain the achievements of centuries to come. It folds you into the purposes of God, draws a direct line all the way from you to His throne, and anchors you to His throne, makes you a coöperant member of the entire concern, and so widens you to something of the breadth, and loads you with something

of the import, of the vastness in which you have become merged.

The Lord keep us from being babes after we have become adult, deliver us from the attenuating effect of a life made up of small chores, cause that the small duties we do be felt by us as the points merely where our own little service is drawn into the broad current of world-interest and the universal purposes of God and accomplish by this means that the wide sweep and felt magnitude of it all may tell back upon us in rich contributions of enlargement, and in our general upbuilding in all that makes for fineness, nobility, breadth and power.

XVIII

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

"Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."—*Colossians 4 : 12.*

THE Sabbath and the sanctuary stand for the things that are eternal in the midst of a world that is full of change and evanescence; so we are going again this morning to have our attention held to one of those commodities that strike down to the permanent heart of things, less frequently a matter of thought or of remark during the week, perhaps, and yet a presence and a power that statedly asserts itself, however quietly, and that has the promise of clearer recognition and wider empire as time and history go on.

The word "goodness," though of distinctly Saxon origin, and entitled therefore to our intellectual and moral respect, is not a term that is held in eminent favour, and to say of a person simply that he is "good" is a kind of "damning with faint praise." You have, the best of you, been sometimes surprised and chagrined at the lukewarmness of sentiment with which you yourselves regard goodness and good people, and have been pained at reflecting that while there is nothing so good as goodness, and no

people that approach so closely as the saints to the Scriptural and Christian ideal, you yet find a great many other people more to your taste, and a great many achievements more stimulating to your admiration than those which have been wrought out by the people of God.

The fact just stated is indisputable, and there is considerable to be said in explanation of it. It has to be conceded, in the first place, that the fact is somewhat of a reflection upon our own characters. A man is known by his admirations. A man betrays his own tastes by the things that he likes. The things that a person enjoys in art or in literature are a kind, and a pretty accurate kind, of thermometric indication of interior temperature. To prefer music of the jingling sort—of the Moody-and-Sankey type, for instance, is to acknowledge one's own musical crudity. To prefer questionable literature is a tacit confession of inward inchastity. It is not what we think, but what we enjoy, that marks our status, æsthetic, intellectual or moral. So that to find in a saintly deed less that interests us or that challenges our fascinated attention, or to find in the character of a saint or in the character of the Lord Himself less that stimulates our soul's fervour and passions than what is contained in the personality or activities of the un-sanctified and the un-Christed, is an unconscious confession that, while it may be part of our theory that there is nothing which signifies so much as goodness, as matter-of-fact, goodness does not count with us nearly as much as some other things,

and that the personages of history do not interest us in proportion to their sanctity.

The situation in which we thus find ourselves, while it ought to make us thoughtful, is not a thing that need greatly surprise us or altogether dishearten us. The condition in which we exist at present is one wherein we are a great deal more animal than we are spiritual. It is claimed by those who have given more thought to the matter than either you or I, that we as a race have emerged from a condition in which we were not spiritual at all, but animal utterly and exclusively. Whatever may be the historic fact in the case it is undeniable that the human race, in the present stage of its development, feels itself more easily at home in the kingdom of animate matter than in the kingdom of mind and spirit, that it is much more in keeping with our native impulses to be brute than to be angel, and that while we have to take pains in order to be angelic we can be animal without taking any pains.

Undoubtedly the hearts of us all assent to the statement just made as being a fair representation of our current situation. The appearance is that that is the problem immediately set for the human race to work out. If you care to assume that in our physical nature we have in the course of the unrecorded ages grown up from very rudimentary beginnings, we shall be prepared to concede that so far as our animal side is concerned we have a good deal to show for the time that has been spent on us, and that when in the expenditure of as much more time,

perhaps, we have made the same progress on the spiritual side of our being as we already have on our animal side, the result will be an achievement upon which humanity may justly pride itself, a result by which even the great Author of our complex nature may well be made glad.

But that is not our condition at present. As spirits we are in an exceedingly rudimentary condition. We know that we are more than animals, and at times have a sense of spirit-capacity that is keen even to the point of pain, but that is not our *staple* experience. We are of the earth earthy. Our ordinary employments are with things; our ordinary experience is a sense-experience—an experience in which the same organs of feeling and perception come into play as distinguish the animal or at least the savage. Civilization—taking the word in its broad sense—is to a very large extent only an improved form of savagery, embodying the instincts of the savage, but with those instincts rescued from more or less of their original coarseness, the result being that men become not less animal but a rather better kind of animal.

As a consequence of all this the judgments that we most naturally form of men and things concern themselves a great deal more with quantity than they do with quality. A thing, an act or a person has to fill a large place in the air in order to fill a large place in our esteem. Sublimity takes a stronger hold upon us than beauty. We gain more of our stimulus through the organs of the body than through those

of the spirit, so that it is primarily by objects that by their magnitude or their glitter make their appeal to the senses that we are most touched and aroused. The hills are as beautiful as the mountains, but not so enormously beautiful. The flowers that bloom by the roadside are as beautiful as the stars but not so gigantically beautiful, and so—three-quarters animal, and seven-eighths savage as we are—we pasture our imaginations on the mountains in preference to the hills, on the constellations rather than on the flowers, quite unlike our Lord who always found in the grasses at His feet and in the birds just above His head, all that He needed wherewith to picture forth His largest and longest meanings. When children are first commencing to read, the words put before them are printed in large letters, perhaps in flaming red letters, and only when the child begins to read with his mind, as well as with his eyes, are the letters toned down to greater simplicity of size and aspect.

The same principle determines for the most part our estimate of deeds and of men. The interest that in general we take in people is not in what they are but in what they have done and in the size, actual or apparent, of what they have done. We are still controlled by a sense of dimension. Even in these matters our eye is to such degree the eye of a child, that conspicuity interests us, and stands to us as a kind of halo that may do a great deal more to illumine the head it encircles than the head does to create the halo. Consequently, a large amount of space is regularly accorded in history to those who

have been put in evidence through their occupancy of regal or imperial position. An English king expects to have his body entombed in Westminster Abbey. Such king may have been a very ordinary sort of person, have become a sovereign purely by accident of birth, and have been notable only by the size of the position he inherited, but as a result of our animal and sense way of estimating things even the wide margin of unoccupied space that environs commonplace royalty is counted in as part of such royalty's personal assets, or if not that exactly, is a consideration that earns for it large advertisement on the historic page. Heaven will be interesting, if for no other reason, that accidental conspicuity will no longer count and that the best harps will be given only to those who know how to play them best.

It is for a similar reason that so much of the emphasis of human interest attaches to men of military renown. The world's great generals have wrought those passages in national and universal history that to the youthful reader certainly, and perhaps to the adult, are the passages of supreme fascination. Cyrus, Alexander, Hannibal, Marlborough, Napoleon, Wellington, are names towards which men's thoughts everywhere gravitate by the power of an attraction well-nigh irresistible. We should be disappointed to have to suppose that that impassioned interest means sympathy with the *kind* of business which such names represent. War undoubtedly means butchery, and, in that sense, a private soldier is a hired

butcher, and a successful general is a man who knows how to marshal hired butchers in a way to convert the greatest possible number of living bodies into carrion.

Now, certainly, it is not that feature of the case that constitutes for us the charm of Arbela, Cannæ, Austerlitz and Waterloo; we do not love slaughter, but we are impressed by the magnitude of action, and by the man who can organize action of magnitude, and who stands portrayed before us in the vast proportions of a battle immense enough to shake a continent, of a campaign so far-reaching in its results as to give direction to the events of a generation or a century. It is not the quality of the man that we think of or care much about. It is his bare enormity that electrifies us. It is like the admiring awe with which we contemplate the fiery track of a blazing meteor. Not one observer out of a thousand has an appreciation disciplined and fine enough to ask what the meteor is made of. He simply prostrates himself in stricken wonderment before the appalling hugeness of the vision-inflaming display. We are so much more affected by a man's vast exhibitions of power than we are by considerations of his moral quality, that we will stand in an attitude of reverential awe in the Hôtel des Invalides—the tomb of Napoleon at Paris—although aware that the body that is there mouldering to dust is the body of one whose supreme distinction it was to be *facile princeps* among the professional butchers of his century. If we would give a little more time to the study of our

admirations we should acquire some information in regard to our natural proclivities that it would be to our advantage to be possessed of, even though not perhaps altogether to our comfort of mind.

In the elementary condition, then, in which as spiritual beings we still exist, in the barbaric stage out of which we have as yet only imperfectly emerged, quantitative judgments are vastly more natural to us than qualitative ones. We can measure a general by the thousands whom he has slain, or by the miles of empire that he has won, but a saint does not readily submit himself to any such estimate of arithmetic or tape-line. Holiness is not celebrated by any accompaniment of fireworks or of aurora borealis. To minds, therefore, that, like the average mind, have not outgrown their barbaric estate, to eyes that, like the average eye, have not advanced beyond the incipiency of the child's eye, saintliness offers little of a pronounced kind to which estimate can readily apply itself. Just as to the little beginner in the primer a word printed in fine type means nothing because it is not printed in type that is big and coloured, so to the average human spirit—which never seems to escape the infantile stage—the delicate, finely inscribed qualities of a human soul and a human life convey no impressive meaning because *too* delicately inscribed to flash athwart the sky in pyrotechnic demonstration.

It is therefore that goodness is so commonly thought of, and even designated, as being a merely negative property—contemplated not as the presence

of something that is positively excellent, but as the absence of anything that is definitely reprobate—a form of amiable vacuity. Now, without caring to deny that there are occasional people that are noticeable for nothing so much as for a certain moral insipidity—like certain edibles that are sufficiently sweet to affect the palate without being sufficiently tasty to be appetizing—yet to interpret that as goodness is to put upon the term a construction that rubs out of that solid Saxon vocable all the best of the honest meaning that properly inheres in it. "Goodness" is no more a negative word than "badness" is. Goodness is no more the mere absence of badness than badness is the mere absence of goodness; there is no absenteeism about either of them. And yet of the two it is goodness that is positive, not badness. A bad man drifts with the current. He follows the bias of his instincts. He goes with the crowd. He may speak great ringing words, but they are words that win from contemporaries willing and applauding audience. He may perform gigantic exploits, but they are not exploits that contravene the tides and passions of the world in whose midst they are accomplished. The collective current of the world sustains him and bears him on. He need not be particular about the means by which his results are attained; the general public is not fastidious and will set him upon a pedestal. The Napoleons are certain to be monumented. A bad man who does nothing will be trampled on, but if he does a great deal and writes his own biography in lines of large

achievement, to the great bulk of observers the immensity of his activity will practically denote more than the poverty of his character.

And all this matter I mention not for the immediate purpose of censuring the public, but as indicating the extent to which the world's great overt actors, even when those actors are ignoble in their purposes and measures, can count upon the world's plaudits, and can expect to be reckoned great, and to be celebrated in the rolls of history and to be more or less handsomely epitaphed, at any rate extensively celebrated, even though it be only the size of their transactions that entitles them to human respect. And the point of all that is that such actors feel that to a very large degree the world is with them, not everybody, but that great dominant mass whose estimates are made out of feet and inches and woven out of glitter and high colours. In that way not only do the actor's own ambitious impulses and perhaps his own depraved tastes and instincts work with him to the attainment of the object he has in view, but to a very large degree the great observing world is alongside of him and coöperant with him, and his path to victory becomes thus a paved path.

Now, when you turn from that picture, and contemplate the man whose strivings, whose struggles, are for goodness, for virtue, for holiness—call it what you like—you are in another world, in a world where every move he makes is a square fight with his own native brutal and barbaric instincts, and where every victory he gains is wrung from the tenacious grasp

of a world whose tides set in continuous and relentless onset upon his heroic endeavour. To be sure, if a man wants to win a fortune he has to work for it; if he wants to gain wisdom he has to work for it; if he is ambitious for political or military preferment he has to work for it; but in all these pursuits his own native impulses cheer him on, and the sympathies of the great unsanctified world are intensely with him, with crowns already in hand with which to wreathe his brow when the goal has been reached.

But that is not the predicament that our candidate for sainthood is in. The man who is ambitious to be a saint has the great, sensuous, carnal world as his enemy, with all the controlling tides with which the world is inundated, and has to make a daily business of crucifying his own flesh with the affections and lusts thereof. No man has so many enemies or such terrific enemies to fight as the man who wants to be holy, not because holiness is a whimsical and lack-adaisical achievement, but because we have not the positive courage and the constructive purpose needed for the winning of so immense a victory, because we are such poltroons as not to dare face the unholy suggestions of our own nature, such limp cowards as to shrink and crawl before the challenges flung at us by a sense-dominated, flesh-loving, ambition-cherishing world. It is not because we do not believe in holiness; it is not because we have not a strange, though sneaking, respect for virtue. Why, the very word "virtue" which, you know, means manliness, is in itself a confession of our dastardly, skulking ad-

miration of it. It is because the battle needed to win it is a hotter battle than we are ready to fight.

Goodness is a good deal more than innocence. Innocence is merely the absence of sin, it is merely the white page with no writing on it of any kind, good or bad. Holiness is a white page, but with a great lot of writing on it, strong writing, big heavy lines which mean superiority to the flesh, not only sympathy with the idea of righteousness, but the adoption of the law of righteousness as the law of life, hearts that feel the burdens and sorrows of others as our own, denial of self and self-devotement to the world; in a word, it means being definitely ranged on the side of all those features of the divine character that have come to such sweetly incisive utterance in the life of Jesus Christ. Don't talk about the negativeness of goodness; talk about the magnificent heroism of it. Don't talk about the flaccid vacancy of saintliness but of the gigantic mass of stuff that has to be in a man before he can stand up and declare "war to the death" with his own brute nature, and "war to the death" with the ignoble impulses that, like so much hot blood, are throbbing through the veins of this feverish world.

A man may be prepared to stand up and be shot down, face the cannon's mouth without blanching, and all the heroism there is in it be only the heroism of a dog in a dog-fight or of a wolf in facing the assault of a hyena. Physical heroism does not even count in the balance against moral heroism, for the very man who on the battle-field dares to put himself

distinctly in the range of the enemy's musket may have had a whole regiment of moral sharpshooters in the shape of his own besetting sins levelled upon him, and not have been morally valiant enough to adventure himself in front of any blessed one of them. There are those among us, doubtless, who, if there were a call to arms, would shoulder their muskets almost gleefully, and go taking their life in their hands without a tremor of nerve or of feeling, who yet for years have had deadlier enemies ambushed in their own hearts, enemies that they knew to be enemies, enemies that they knew to be stealthily undermining their souls with the intent of letting off an eventual blast in the ruin of which their souls would collapse in everlasting desolation, and yet who have never frankly fronted those enemies, but on the contrary have skulked away from them because they were afraid of them, because they had not in them the stuff to face them. Think your way down into the heart of this great matter. Let us be men and stand up in front of the facts and not sneak around behind them.

Any young person here who has the burning ambition to be a showy and chronicled exploiter but who superciliously compliments goodness as the amiable frailty of the females of both sexes, simply does not know what goodness is, has never engaged in a stand-up fight with enemies that lie a great deal closer to his own bosom than swarthy Cubans or barbaric Filipinos, and has never ventured to test his own moral muscle in a supreme wrestling match with

his own selfishness, lusts and ambitions, and has never trodden in the path that was first blazed by the Lord, the supreme achievement of whose life it was to condemn sin in the flesh—to be a man, that is, in every sense of the term, with all the awful possibilities of evil that manhood always carries with it, and yet to be ready at a moment's notice to encounter the devil in an open field, the devil as he is in human nature, the devil as he asserts himself in all the gigantic push of evil influence running in swift inundating tide everywhere in the world, and prepared to come off conqueror, supremely and infinitely sovereign over an arch-adversary so mighty in his resources, so valiant in his impudence, as to dare assail the Son of God.

That was the Lord's consummating achievement, that He could be a man, born of human flesh, in relations of intimacy with the world's depravity and still be perfectly holy. Studied no lessons, made no money, fought no battles, ascended no throne, engineered no colossal enterprises, but He did more than any of these, more than all of these, and stands forth to-day on the roll of history, and in the recognition of the whole Christian world, as the only man of such puissant heroism as to be able to retire from the battle-ground of life with His record of valour unstained by a single, solitary blot of defeat.

We shall, therefore, I am sure, regard this solid, exacting matter of human goodness, from a little different point of view from that so customarily occupied by that semi-barbarous class of people who build

their estimates out of size and colour and flamboyant demonstration, and we will remember that to be victors over sin is the final purpose of human life, that it is that alone which constitutes candidacy for divine approval, and that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

XIX

MINISTERING ANGELS

"He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways."—*Psalm 91 : 11.*

THE amount of impression that will be left upon us by a verse as sweet in its spirit as this, at the same time as bewildering perhaps in its scope, will depend upon the preparedness of mind and heart with which the verse is approached by us. There are some truths that we are not easily equal to. Just that human infirmity was recognized by our Lord when He said to His disciples,—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." This was not to find fault with them, but only to recognize the fact that there was not room yet in their thought for certain larger truths that would have to be held in reserve for them,—not amplitude sufficient in their vision to feel all the way through and around the prospect that lay out before them.

And let me say here that the increase in that receptive power is an important element in what we know as Christian growth. We ought to be able from month to month, or at least from year to year, not only to seize with a firmer grasp the truths we have already taken to ourselves, but also to be stepping out upon ground that has not yet been familiar-

ized to us, thus acquiring for ourselves a larger and larger world, peopled with an ever-expanding population of realities.

And that there should be this continuous progress in our powers of appreciation and in the number of things we appreciate, is seen to be exceedingly reasonable when we think, on the one hand, of man's capacity for enlargement, intellectual and spiritual, and on the other hand of the necessary infinitude of reality, of which we have as yet acquired but a very little. That is presumably the reason why children gain so rapidly in knowledge and experience in their first years, that the acquisitions they have made do not loom up so large as to foster their pride and as to become a barrier interfering with a progress that is still more extended. It does not occur to them in their early days to imitate the example of the silkworm and to exclude God's universe by cocooning themselves in a little silken habitat of their own weaving.

He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. Even if we have another purpose in view in our use of this text, yet it is pleasant to stop a moment with the gentle favour shown to us by this assurance of God's keeping care. It seems to me that if we had more of the feeling that God's thoughtfulness is being exercised in our behalf,—somewhat as a mother's feelings are always enlisted for her children, and therefore made promotive of their protection and interest,—we should be drawn into that attitude towards God that would not only

secure to us greater restfulness and confidence of heart, but that would put us more immediately in the way of having His thoughtfulness made effective to us. Some children are so independent, and so ignore all care, except that which they exercise over themselves, that the care which their father would take of them has little or no opportunity to slip into their lives and become a sweet and saving blessing there. We are all of us a little disposed to imitate the example of the Prodigal Son in this respect, that though we may not drop to the same level of degradation as he, yet we go away from our father's house, leave behind us the ministry that he can render us and would love to render us, and then come down to a life that is more or less impoverished because we depend only upon our own resources for the maintenance of that life. We may say without irreverence, I think, that even God cannot do for us all that it is in His power and heart to do, unless we so draw near to Him as to be enticed within the folds of His tender guardianship. Therein is evinced very much of the delicate Gospel import of David's Twenty-third Psalm, in which the writer is seen not only to acknowledge God's shepherding care but is felt to be gathering himself, in reposeful satisfaction, in under the covert of that shepherding care.

He shall give His *angels* charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. We think a good deal about the invisible life and of the relations of that life to the life that is visible. There are reasons for thinking that men's thoughts range over longer tracks than is

ordinarily apparent. I have learned, by conversation with all kinds of people, that there is little if any difficulty,—even in the case of those who might seem to be altogether thoughtless about everything except what is close by,—little if any difficulty in drawing out their regards over ground that lies far away from the track of the commonplace, and ground that reaches out to a spot where thought breaks down into serious and tender query. We are all of us more or less richly endowed with that irrepressible tendency.

It is a beautiful fact that it is so, and not only very beautiful but exceedingly suggestive. It means that there is in us a native tendency to think sometimes with long thoughts; and it puts us ruminating upon those migratory birds which, without perhaps ever having *visited* a more Southern clime, nevertheless have an instinctive sense of warmer airs, and plume their wings for flight to regions where those warmer airs are to be found. Why even when we are upon the sea the eye, at the behest of an impulse which it cannot explain, continually struggles with the distance, nor rests till it has arrived at the remote meeting-place of the waters and the sky; and if we have ever stood upon high mountainous ground we know how immediately our regards drift to the uttermost limit of so much of God's universe as becomes magnificently visible, and even then struggle to surmount the horizon with something of the resentment with which an imprisoned bird beats its wings against the bars of its cage. I tell you again that the human

mind and heart are wonderful, and that consciously, or possibly unconsciously, they lie close upon the edge of things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard.

Now just as the horizon is felt by us to be not the edge of the world but only the limit of vision, so in our thought it requires not only so much of God's kingdom as is visible but also so much of it as is invisible, to constitute the complete domain over which God's mind rules and His love prevails. And that causes the invisible realm to seem more neighbourly in its relation to us. There is very much achieved for the enlargement of our thought and for our general expansion and uplift, when we have learned to conceive that there is really but one realm over which is extended the sway of a single will, but one great family pervaded by the affection of a single Father.

And there is no time when it is more comforting to note that, than when we stand by the side of the casket, and our thoughts go roaming out searchingly after the loved one that is gone. We may have no very definite thought as to the present locality of the spirit that is sped, but at such time I love to say to the bereaved that the departed husband, wife, child, is somewhere, that he or she is awake with a consciousness of life, that the mind that was has not ceased to be mind, that the heart that has been strong with purpose, and warm with affection, is still sturdy in its intentions and still tender in its loves; and not only that, but that it is resident in some portion of

that one realm of which the things, which we know here so well, form a *kindred* portion.

Now whether so long as we live on this side of the great divide we shall ever come into *intelligent* connection with the things, the forces, the spirits that throng and populate the regions that lie invisible just across the horizon, is a question quite by itself. The Western continent had existed a great while, seemingly, before the Eastern continent came close enough to it in its thought and apprehension to give it a fixed place and character in its scheme of the world, or before it could confidently mark its place on the chart of the lands and the seas. But we know a great deal about the Western continent now, and in all directions the interrogativeness of the human mind is very much on the alert and it is impossible to forecast what advances into the untried regions of the spiritual world human discovery may or may not make.

But this much it is pretty safe to assume, that, granting the existence of two continents, separated only by the narrow horizon of death, or perhaps we should rather say connected by the brief avenue of death, the two continents are mutually influential, and that neither of the two leaves the other of the two in a condition of absolute isolation and neglect.

We infer this in the first place by scrutinizing a bible that is considerably older than the printed one that we read from, and which is as veracious in its teaching as the Scriptures of Isaiah, Jesus and St. Paul; I mean the book of nature, by which we have

been authoritatively taught that every part is responsive to the appeal of every other part, that nothing stands alone and uninfluenced. That is one of the marvellous features of God's material world, that however remote from one another its several portions may be, those portions nevertheless in a way touch each other. It has been scientifically asserted that there is no footfall at the surface of our globe but makes itself felt throughout the universe and disturbs the center of gravity of that universe. However infinitesimal the effect, *there is the effect*, and the most distinct spheres distributed through infinite space understand one another, or at least tell upon one another, and there is not a sun nor a planet throughout all the ranges of the illimitable distances that is not at this instant taking hold to help guide our own little earth along the orbit divinely ordained for it to pursue.

That is exactly the idea of the word universe, that every part of it is contributory to every other part and to the whole. That is a thought for the human mind to receive and to educate itself upon ; and now you have only to take that idea and to extend its reference to that still larger universe which includes not only the facts and forces of the material world, but the facts and forces also of the spiritual world, and you come out at once upon this result, that there is a mutuality of interest and of influence existing between the world of men as we know it here and now, and that other realm into which as immortal beings we expect eventually to be ushered. We are

not begging the question, but only following the analogy framed upon so much as we understand of God's method as taught us by what we know of matters now and all about us.

But the Word of Nature and the Word of God multitudinously advertise the same truth and sing exactly the same tune, that the whole creation of God, the spiritual creation, the realm of spirits made perfect and of angels, all included, form part of one sensitive entirety, and that as the distant star Alcyone is at this moment knocking at the door of our little globe and pushing its stellar greeting upon our hospitality, that so the world of angelic and of human life that is now maintaining itself in regions and methods too obscure for us to be able yet definitely to track, is bending its influence upon us, and is a practical factor in the ongoings of our present existence, individual and associate.

You would be interested, and some of you perhaps very much instructed, by taking the Scriptures and reading them with an exclusive reference to the amount of personal influence, not only divine but also finite, that drops down from the invisible realm to the realm of the visible, and that is not only present with us sympathetically but that is operative among us practically, protectively, determinatively.

I want to recite before you two or three examples of that. And the first is one to which we have made comparatively recent reference, but which, at the risk of repetition, should not be altogether excluded from our present meditation. It is that

wherein the author of the Hebrew Letter, in his anxiety to stimulate to highest point of endeavour the spiritual ambition of his readers, deliberately draws aside for a moment the curtain which hides from the human heart the containings of the heavenly world, and the sainted population, with which that world is thronged, and lets his readers feel the impulse, gladdening and quickening, of eyes heavenly but still human, that were bent in earnest but tender sympathy upon the struggles of those that are still toiling down here upon the weary arena. It is almost the most thrilling picture anywhere drawn upon the pages of the Holy Word. It makes the heavenly world so human, and the human world so heavenly. It is a picture to feed the soul upon till it grows to the stature of the vast possibilities portrayed. It seems to erase the horizon that to the unquickened eye pushes the life eternal into the shadowed distance that is impenetrable, and while still exalting the new life, that is to be, to an altitude that can be surveyed only by an uplifted eye, still brings that altitude within the reach of human vision and of human thought and love.

In terms that are unmistakable in their intention it shows the other world to be *conscious* of this world, and we cannot turn from the picture without there being left in our hearts the very tender but the very strengthening feeling that we are not forgotten by those that have gone on before, but that we are carried still in their serious but affectionate regard. Properly appreciated its effect upon us is irresistible.

It has the effect of some system of spiritual telegraphy by which the very thoughts of those who have thought with us in days just gone by, or the thoughts and possessions of those who lived down here in days long gone by, are flashed down to us and become an impulse in our own bosoms. I do not know that any artist has undertaken to put upon canvass the scene thus verbally delineated in the twelfth of Hebrews, but if it could be done it would work upon us with an impression more potent in a way because more level to human yearning than even the masterpiece of Raphael which pictures the reëntrance into our world of Moses and Elijah in the scene of the Transfiguration.

Were this, which occurs in the Hebrew Letter, the only instance in which the Scriptures swing aside the curtain that hangs between us and the homes and hearts of the sainted, we would not give to it the emphasis of so pointed a reference; but it simply falls into pace with the tread of Scripture thought throughout, which, while, with the self-restraint which is one of the notes of Scripture, it refrains from filling into the picture all those fond and intimate details that our hearts are sometimes so hungry for, yet continually, from beginning to end, evinces the neighbourliness of the world here and the world there, and in no uncertain way sets forth the commerce of interested concern which between those two worlds is mutually maintained.

Our second illustration is from the book of Daniel, —an instance into which the element of heart-appeal

does not so much enter, but which exhibits the interest taken in earthly affairs by the finite personages of the celestial world, and the agency exercised by those personages in the management of earthly affairs, and sets forth that interest and agency under terms as unequivocal and direct as those which we should any of us employ in describing the conduct of any every-day earthly matter of business. Of course we recognize the governing control which God exerts in human affairs, but what we are in pursuit of just now is a heavenly influence, but at the same time an influence exerted by heaven but exerted there in ways so human or so near to the human as shall make heaven and all there is there more neighbourly and companionable. For while we are not pleading in behalf of a celestial world that is not thoroughly exalted, we are hungry for one that is human enough and enough like the one we have here to be interesting and that we can think about in terms of our present vocabulary and that we can feel towards with the passions that make out so large a part of our best present experience.

The scene I want to make use of I shall not describe in the exact phraseology of the book of Daniel, but in terms which, while altogether reverent, carry with them a little more of the flavour of every-day transactions.

Daniel had prayed; his whole soul was rapt in devout and profound meditation. He had given himself to study the world and to try to solve its terrific problems. His spirit was lifted up in one unspeak-

able longing for illumination, that he might find the meaning in the obscure lines set for his perusal. And the answer came in the shape of an angel, a busy angel, one of those commissioners that God sends down on errands, thus enabling heaven to help keep the earth from going wrong, and to put into the hearts of men the idea that heaven is close by and affectionately watching things down here. And the angel on his arrival told Daniel he had had so many commissions on his hands that he had had to let Daniel pray for three weeks before he could find time to attend to him.

Now that is the story, and I like it. It does not read much like ordinary tracts on youthful piety, but it paints the whole situation in colours that are restful to the human eye and heart. It gives us a swift glimpse of the machinery of divine administration. It lets us see the agencies at work by which God carries forward His enterprises in the spiritual world, and shows to us one of the embassadors, delegates, commissioners,—or call them by what name you will,—by which He lets Himself be represented, and through whom, as His angelic proxies, He lets such of His plans be carried out as He does not care to execute in His own person.

It is all very simple. It is quite like what we are accustomed to in the relations that exist here upon the earth, where mere men and women are called to act for Him; only in the magnificent picture drawn for us in this glowing passage in Daniel the earthly and heavenly kingdoms are brought into one, the

interests of the two revealed as sympathetic; and while the scene there portrayed does not roll from us humans the responsibility for the ongoings of event, lets that responsibility devolve in a superior way upon the loyalty and loving wisdom of those whose primary sphere of service is in the regions celestial, who train upon us their counsels and efforts from out the midst of the eternal world and whose commissions of service are issued and endorsed at the very foot of the throne.

But there remains yet one illustration, more sweet and tender, and one which while addressing the intelligence, makes a still more urgent appeal to the heart. It is afforded us in words uttered by our Lord Himself. It is where He has been speaking of the children. There were none towards whom His thoughts seemed to move with so gentle a love as towards the little ones, those minute souls so fresh from God that the stains of sin had not yet had time to gather upon them. It is where He says of them that they are so beautiful in God's eye and so dear to His heart that He puts them in charge of the angels that are ranged nearest Him in the heavenly kingdom, and around the heavenly throne. There is scarcely anything in all of God's Word, it seems to me, that reveals in a way so sweetly eloquent God's inexpressible gentleness of thought and feeling.

But the reason for my reference to it is that it lets us see and feel the interest which the world above takes in the world below, the interlocking of the thoughts and sympathies of the two worlds, and that,

as the impulses of our hearts move up, blindly and uncertainly perhaps, towards the things, the personages, the loved and sainted spirits on high, so there is at this moment, and at every moment, a descending current of affectionate regard in the warm inundation of which our lives, even though unconsciously, are nevertheless maintained. And not only a descending current of affection, but as well a descending current of influence, influence so practical, so operative, that thought is controlled by it, lives steadied by it and a measure of protection secured to us by means of it,—angels that are so direct and personal in their ministration and in the sheltering service they render us that the only way by which we can justly designate them is by calling them our guardian angels.

And then standing firm-footed upon this basis laid for us by Christ's own word, our fond thoughts do insist upon roaming out still a little more broadly and upon wondering whether the sainted souls that have moved up from this world into the other, whether they too do not soon commence to have little angelic commissions given to them, little errands of mercy, and fond, even if invisible, ministry to those whom it was their joy to care for before the pitiful hour of separation arrived. What angel could more fittingly or appreciatively serve a bereft husband than the sainted wife who all her life long had made his every want her waking and her sleeping thought? What more natural than that a tender, anxious mother should continue to shed her loving influence

over the child she had so joyously borne and with such rapt devotement nourished and nurtured? Who else could so gently and deftly fold herself into the creases of the little one's necessities? Is that too good to be true? Would it not be more in the spirit of Christ's Gospel to say that it is so good it must be true?

And so, I say to you, dear friends, the spirit world at any rate is not far away: it is not unneighbourly nor indifferent. Our thoughts grow larger and mellower in the midst of the holy mystery of it all; and as we go on we learn more and more to believe in the wider truth and to trust the larger, sweeter hope.

XX

THE DUEL FOUGHT OUT IN THE LORD'S GRAVE

"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not POSSIBLE that He should be holden of it."—*Acts 2 : 24.*

WE are of course interested this morning in the general fact that Christ rose; more interested by far, I should suppose, in the profounder fact that resurrection was with Him the only issue possible. We like to think of it that a healthy seed planted in the ground comes up; but it means a great deal more to us to know that it comes up because it is its nature to come up; because to come up is the only thing it is qualified to do; because germination lies in the natural order of event; and because the life that is in the acorn becomes an oak since that life has an oak destiny and the shell of the acorn is not tenacious enough to interfere with that destiny: and so the nucleus of life that is in the shell bursts itself free and comes out, comes up, rises from the dead; resurrection; resurrection in the vegetable world.

The same thing, in a small coarse way, that transpired that first Sunday morning at the Lord's grave. Nothing so very unnatural about resurrection then; nature had been rehearsing for it for a million years,

every time that a seed,—from away back, from the time when there first commenced to be seeds,—became lodged, *buried* in the ground, and split its little sepulchre and came up to where it could meet the sunshine and have a little baptism of dew upon it. It is wonderful what delicate pictures nature draws of personal and spiritual realities before those realities arrive,—the quiet, dramatic way in which the world goes along yielding presentiments of what is to be some time hence,—perhaps a very long time hence.

Christ was dead, as men count "dead." What is it to die? Nobody knows. The commonest things are mysteries as soon as we begin to ask questions. A man needs to think only a little in order to be qualified to be dogmatic. But whatever it means to be dead, and whatever it means to be alive, life and death fought it out between them in Christ's sepulchre and life won; *had* to win, because it was stronger than death. Shell is bound to crack when interior vitality squeezes it. We define nothing, but that is what happened, and that is what we are celebrating.

So while we rejoice this morning in the fact that Christ came out of the grave, we want to let our thoughts center just now on the prior fact that the grave was not *competent* to retain Him, that it could not sustain the strain of the peculiar type of vitality that was immured in that grave, and that whatever death is and whatever the steel bands of confinement that it wraps around its victims, here was a victim that could not be victimized, too intrinsically free to

remain a captive, too inherently irresistible to continue a slave.

It is a sublime moment in a man's life, when for the first time he becomes definitely convinced—definitely and glowingly convinced—that there are energies in actual operation that are too colossal and stubborn for the world's ordinary forces to be able to resist, and that there is a system of dynamics outside of, and transcending, the system familiarized to us by common event and vulgar experience.

The philosophy of life, so soon as the little child is old enough to begin to have a philosophy of life, takes its complexion from what lies closest to his hand, and most immediate to his experience. The child is, therefore, by force of circumstances, a materialist. All the world that he knows anything about or that seems to him necessary is the world that is in sight—necessarily so, although to his disadvantage: it is always disadvantageous to sound a key-note that is below the level of the tune that is to be sung. The twig gets bent that way and quite naturally the tree becomes correspondingly inclined.

So that when we become adult and talk about the actualities of life we mean generally the things that can be collected into a physical sequence and tracked to physical sources. Inasmuch as our wings are only in an incipient state, when we travel we like to move with our feet upon the ground. The air is well enough to peer up into, but is liable to be inspected by us interrogatively and perhaps querulously. We like best to be where there is no apparent danger of

falling off. We wonder why it is that the stars do not tumble out of their orbits, and every bird frolicking in the upper air seems a kind of impertinent and precarious adventuress. Especially when for material atmosphere we substitute spiritual atmosphere, and try to think forth into a region where there is a class of energies at work that such words as "gravity" and "chemical affinity" or "chemical repulsion" are no suitable label for. And so I say it is a sublime moment in a man's life when for the first time he becomes definitely convinced,—definitely and glowingly convinced,—that there are energies in actual operation that are too colossal and stubborn for the world's ordinary forces to be able to resist, and that there is a system of dynamics outside of, and transcending, the system familiarized to us by common event and vulgar experience.

I know of nothing that more satisfactorily and pleasantly bridges the chasm that yawns between the every-day material forces that are operating about us, and the forces which make up the enginery of the spiritual world, than what we know by the familiar name of life, life, for example, as it asserts itself in the processes of the forest. No one appears to know at all what such life is, and it can be studied only in its effects, and its effects are most curious; and one of those curious effects is this, that when vegetable life comes into collision with certain other forces, even though more tangible and more ponderable than itself, those other forces have to give way. Such life force is not visible; it makes no noise, no fuss, in its

operations, but it operates, and whatever gets in its way that is not life has to get out of its way.

Any one of you who has traversed the woods with an eye to what is going on there, must repeatedly have observed the sovereignty, not to say the tyranny, which a growing forest-tree exerts over whatever obstacle, even though that obstacle be of granite, stands in the path of its progressive vitality, inserting its branches or its roots into the crevices of the rock and cleaving the ledge apart with the quiet, unworried facility with which a child might pluck asunder the petals of a flower. There is great majesty in the serenity of its intrusion, of its invasion, upon territory that would seem to be sufficiently fortified against invasion. It is a case where might that is invisible simply *plays* with other might that is exceedingly visible and that wears to the eye the aspect of the unconquerable.

At a point in the Yosemite, where the wall of sheer rock rises almost perpendicularly to a height of three thousand feet, half-way up that precipitous ascent there is growing a pine tree, one hundred and forty feet high. It has burrowed out for itself a home in the rock. With fingers of exceeding delicacy, but of more than the inflexible penetrativeness of steel, it has reached its way quietly but irresistibly into the adamantine fastnesses of the grim pile, and it stands there, submitted to by the rock, smiled upon by the sun, baptized by the rain, a dramatic monument to the sway wielded over the precipice, massive but inert, by what was once but a minute seed-kernel of

life, cast there by the wind, dropped there perhaps by a bird,—a silent but thrilling eulogy upon the incalculable possibilities of the thing that *lives*. We do not know what such life is, but there is a gentle flavour of omnipotence about it, and although it classifies below the rank of the spiritual, yet already there is in it an impulse of gracious defiance to whatever offers it challenge.

There was shown to me a few days ago by a friend, personally familiar with the scene portrayed, the picture of a grave in the cemetery of Hanover, Germany. It was the grave of a woman who lived in the times of Strauss the skeptic, who had been influenced by his teachings, had become antagonistic to the doctrine of the resurrection, but who from lingering suspicion that that doctrine might be true, left instructions in her will that upon the occasion of her death her entombment should be made so secure that the resurrection could not reach her. There was accordingly piled upon her grave, one upon another, massive slabs of marble or granite, sufficient, it would seem, to protect her poor body from the disturbance of earthquake, and so deeply immured as to leave her ashes quite beyond the reach of the last trump. And not only was there all this accumulation of cemented masonry, but the superincumbent layers were bound to those underneath by clasps of steel, so that the entire pile had secured to it almost the solidity of native rock.

Unfortunately, however, for the hopes of the suspicious lady, an atom of vegetable life got covered

up underneath the imposed masonry, and a little shrub, nourished, we should like to suppose, by the decayed materials of her own body, commenced to grow, and with that instinctive impulse common to all plant life began to try to find its way out into the light and air. And as against the irresistibleness of that bit of young vegetable omnipotency, artificial masonry did not count. Seams began to open themselves along the lines of original cleavage. The clasps by which the planks and blocks of stone had been knit together resisted the strain, till the energy of life came to the full assertion of its power and wrenched the clasps from their sockets, and pushed the slabs off from the path of its own victorious progress. And those slabs lie there to-day in a condition of beautiful disruption, with the full-grown tree standing in their midst, in quiet sarcasm upon the anti-resurrection ambition of the buried woman, and in verdant eulogy upon the irresistibleness of *life*.

Now in what relation life, as represented in that tree, or in any tree, stands to the higher type of life of which we are conscious in our own personality, it is not important to consider; but it is not easy to contemplate such facts as have just been cited without beginning to suspect the natural ascendency which it belongs to the life of the human spirit to exercise over the lower grade of obstacle by which it constantly finds itself hindered and enslaved. God seems to have arranged matters in the material world in a way to point our attention to like matters of a superior order as they exist in the spiritual

world, and to have given us the opportunity to study the vitality of a tiny shrub in the act of asserting its dominion over the geology of the globe, in order to set us thinking upon the more exalted dominion that it belongs to the living spirit of men to exercise over the limitations of whatever kind by which that spirit is hindered and contradicted.

And the case is made still stronger when this humanness of ours is thought of as an occupied tenement constructed to be the residence of the Spirit of God; for a man is not perfectly a man till he is more than a man, and until he has commenced to become the theater of divine action, an organ of the divine life. And once that result is achieved it is not easy to say exactly what limits can be set to the efficiency of the life that is in us along any line whatsoever of legitimate action and progress. As we think upon these things, that pine tree flourishing up there on the slope of El Capitan, and that crumpled grave in the cemetery at Hanover, gain an ever-increasing significance.

With this understanding of ourselves, it is the limits we put upon ourselves, not the limits put upon us by God and nature, that block our pathway towards larger attainment and more abounding effects. So viewed, faith is less a leaning upon support outwardly held in divine reserve for us, than it is a conscious appropriation of the divine supply already made over to us and in constant readiness for our use. The peculiar significance of the Pentecostal event seems rather to lie in this, that then for the first time the Apostles became conscious of the removal

of those barriers that had hindered a larger knowledge of heavenly things and a more fruitful exercise of heavenly powers. There then sprang up within them a sense of competency and a holy contempt for what they had hitherto regarded as hindrances. Doors stood wide in front of them. Avenues opened out broadly in interminable perspective. The inflow of the tide was sufficient to cover the shallows and to create deep sea and safe sailing to any port of the world.

Now there are varieties of entombment to which we are all of us naturally subject, by which I mean that nature has enclosed us within certain limitations, limitations of a frangible kind, however, and which it is the proper function of our own spirits, divinely reënforced, to rend asunder; so that life at its truest and best will show itself to be a continuous process of resurrection, the Easter-Sabbath of Christ to find a small echo of itself in each year and day of our human experience, and the lengthening pathway of our life to be strewn with the broken links that have been shattered by the pressure of our restless and expansive spirits. Christ's emergence from the grave is but a single tone, though a fundamental tone, in the music of which it is the special province of each soul, and the general mission of all the world, to join in the rendering.

Of course we understand only too well how limited as yet is our knowledge of truth, how contracted is the firmament up into which our thoughts essay greedily to aspire, how close above us hovers the

mist of obscurity and uncertainty, and how few the stars that have yet been able to make a pathway through that mist and to picture themselves upon our eye in lines of definite light. But we cannot have studied the history of human thought and research, and the ever-widening area over which that thought has enlarged itself, and the material firmament that is arched above us growing every year more rich in discovered extent and more populous in discovered beauty and splendour, without realizing that what we call horizon is only an arbitrary limitation, wound about us rather as a provocative than as a discouragement; less a barrier than means of access to a larger prospect; a mere frangible shell through which incubated thought can peck its way out into a wider and more sunny world.

And just that fact is full of revelation and blessed stimulus, for it teaches us that emergence from the sepulchral confines of ignorance is a part of God's plan for the soul and for the world; that while the sky is put far enough from us to be difficult, it is also put near enough to us to be enticing; that there is somehow a universal tendency,—what we might call a divine tide,—that sets eternally towards a better knowledge of things and of God, into the draft of which individual spirits are drawn; and that it lies in the nature and in the divinity of men and of things that in proportion as we yield to the impulse of that tide, and let the spirit of God become great within us, our ignorance of matters both terrestrial and celestial will brighten into knowledge, our

tomb become divinely unsealed, the Easter-Sabbath of our Lord find a minute echo of itself in each year of our brightening experience, and the pathway of our life, slowly lengthening itself into the domain of the best that can be known, be strewn with the broken links that have been shattered by the pressure of our restless and divinely quickened spirits.

And who is there of us who does not understand the darkness and the chill of that grave of unholy desire in which the soul lies entombed, and how unyielding apparently the stone that blocks emergence from the grave. But, as there is a divine power that makes for knowledge, so there is a divine power that makes for righteousness. God's Spirit is alive in the world,—alive in the valley as well as upon the hills, alive in the tomb as well as in the temple, and there is no chain of unsanctity bound about the soul whose links cannot be shattered by the expansive power of human *life* if only baptized of God into a condition of infinite vitality. It is life that, under all circumstances, constitutes the genius of enfranchisement. It converts California granite into garden soil; it levels down horizons into an interminable vista; it lays its irresistible commands upon unhallowed desire, it puts its yoke upon the body, yea, it even gilds the body, the human face, with something of the luster of its own sanctified beauty; it makes of every kind of prison an open playground and lets the fragrant breadth of the whole world into any closest and stuffiest charnel-house.

In a closing word, the sum of my Easter message

to you is to say that it is life, still, that will be the only sufficient enfranchising power when we fall within the grip of those mysterious bonds that we blindly know by the name of death. Only a forest-tree vigorously endowed with the energies of life would have matched the malignant forces of the Yosemite, strenuously set to work its extinction. Only a tree abundantly endowed with the energies of life would have been sufficient to anticipate the final resurrection and to throw open to the daylight a tomb purposed to be closed and sealed "fur die ewigkeit."

In the duel fought out in the Lord's grave it was not by some act of special gratuitous deliverance that the entombed Spirit was rescued from the captivity of death, but because the containings of that Spirit were not amenable to captivity, "could not be holden of it," were of a sort that the powers of physical corruption could not assert over them their grim imperialism,—existed with a life that was distinctly alien to the empire of decay.

In the instance of the tree growing out of the rocky ledge of El Capitan its continuance was secured to it not by any act of providential interposition, but by the inextinguishable vigour of its own vitality. And quite like that, we may be assured, are the means by which we also are to have our own existence permanently maintained and to survive the crisis of that we call death. It is not so much a question whether God will *keep* us alive, and by special exertion rescue us from an extinction and

an oblivion of which we should otherwise be the victims, but whether, quite aside and apart from the body which is destined to corruption, we are possessed of life such that it is in its own nature inextinguishable, inherently eternal. In other words, whether our own spirit has become so possessed, so charged, with the divine Spirit that we simply *cannot be blotted out*, so long as *God* lasts; bound up with Him in one common bundle of life, able thus to have fulfilled in us those splendid Easter words of our Lord,—"Because I live you are going to live too."

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